Calvin and the Early Reformation

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To our wives
Amy and Laurel

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Acknowledgements

Many of the essays in this book began their life as presentations at the 2017 Calvin Studies Society's Colloquium held at Baylor University, where both of us teach. A conference like that and a volume such as this require the aid and support of many people. When David was elected vice-president of the Society in 2015, he raised the idea of holding the conference at Baylor with his department chair, William Bellinger. Dr. Bellinger was the most enthusiastic supporter of this endeavor at Baylor. The financial support he offered on behalf of the Religion Department was significant. He also enlisted the support of the College of Arts & Sciences and Truett Seminary at Baylor. Todd Still, Dean of Truett Seminary, Lee Nordt, Dean of Arts and Sciences, and Kimberly Kellison, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences at Baylor all lent crucial logistical and financial support as well. We, and the Society, are deeply grateful for all their efforts. Along the way, many others at Baylor stepped in and stepped up to help ensure a successful conference. Joyce Swoveland, administrator of the Religion Department, helped David with many of the pre-conference logistics. He wishes to express the deepest of thanks to her because, frankly, he isn't all that good with the tiny nitty-gritty things you need to think about in order to host a large group of people from around the globe successfully. The conference was held at Truett, and they were incredibly gracious hosts. The facility is gorgeous, but it was the people there who truly shined. Brian handled much of pre-conference work there, aided by Molly Wilmington, Dorothy Terry, and Jan Cason. Casey Ramirez and his staff made sure that all of the technology required to pull off a conference worked! The conference always hosts one public lecture. Kimlyn Bender, Professor of Christian Theology at Truett, Beverly Gaventa, University Professor of New Testament, and Paul Sands, a former Professor of Theology at Truett and now Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodway, TX, joined us for that event and made the discussion of the Apostle Paul and the New Calvinism exciting and engaging. The final group of Baylor folks to thank are the graduate students who stepped up at every call. They picked people up, ran errands, even grabbed doughnuts one morning when it looked like the coffee break would be just coffee. So, thank you to Joshua Smith, Lynneth Miller, Steven Tyra, and Timothy Orr. Two graduate students lent their considerable editorial skills to this project as it developed. They found and prevented many errors and typographical mistakes. Any that remain were likely reintroduced by one of us after their masterful work. This volume is stronger and clearer because of the work of Erik Lundeen and Scott Prather.

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David served as vice-president of the Calvin Studies Society from 2015–2017, and thus served as the program chair for the conference. In those roles and on behalf of the Society, he would like to thank the people who aided him in the program's development as well as the organizations that underwrote individual lectures at the conference. First and foremost among these people is Barbara Pitkin. At every step along the way, she provided counsel and support. Words cannot express how deeply I am in her debt. Even after the conference as she transitioned to immediate past-president, she helped me understand my new role. Ezra Plank ensured the website and publicity looked amazing and also made sure all our bills were paid. Thanks to them both for such a smooth conference. Others who came to my aid include Karen Spierling, Jill Fehleison, Yudha Thianto, Jeffrey Watt, Christine Kooi, Karin Maag, Paul Fields, Kathryn Edwards, and Ward Holder. Beyond Baylor University the following organizations supported the conference: Austin Theological Seminary, the Society for Reformation Research (which named our conference as one of its 500th Anniversary conferences), the Dunham Bible Museum, the H. Henry Meeter Center at Calvin College, and the Presbyterian Church, USA.

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Finally, a word of thanks to our wives Amy and Laurel, who each in their own way helped sustain this project. John Calvin was a deeply personal man. We know very little about his family life, but we do know he loved his wife deeply. He remarked to Viret that she was "the best companion of my life." It is our sincere pleasure to dedicate this volume to our best companions.

BCB
DMW
10 July 2019

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Abbreviations

AHR	*American Historical Review*
ARG	*Archiv für Reformationsgeschicte*
BHR	*Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*
BnF	*Bibliothèque nationale de France*
BOL	*Martini Buceri Opera Latina*. Martini Buceri Opera Omnia, Series 2. Leiden: Brill, 1954–.
CO	*Opera quae supersunt omnia*. 59 volumes. Corpus Reformatorum 29–87. Edited by Wilhelm Baum, Edward Cunitz, & Edward Reuss. Brunswick: Schwetschke, 1863–1900.
COR	*Ioannis Calvini opera omnia denuo recognita et adnotatione critica instructa notisque illustrata*. Geneva, 1992–.
LCC	*The Library of Christian Classics*. 26 Volumes. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952–69.
LW	*Luther's Works*, 55+ volumes. St. Louis & Philadelphia: Concordia & Fortress, 1955–.
OS	*Joannis Calvini opera selecta*. Edited by P. Barth and G. Niesel. 5 vols. Munich: Kaiser, 1926–36.
QGT	*Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*
RHDF	*Revue historique de droit français et étranger*
SCJ	*The Sixteenth Century Journal*
W^2	*Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften*. Edited by Johann Georg Walch. St. Louis: Concordia, 1881–1910.
WA	*D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. 120+ volumes. Weimar: Bohlaus, 1883–. (WA for the writings, WADB for the Luther Bible, WABR for the letters, WATR for the Table Talks).
WPBW	*Willibald Pirckheimers Briefweschsel*, ed. Emil Reicke et al., 7 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1940–2009)
ZSKG	*Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte*
ZW	*Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke*. Edited by Emil Egli et al. Leipzig/Zurich: Heinsius/TVZ, 1905–91

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1200 documents from the Parlement of Paris entitled *Religion, Reformation, and Repression in the Reign of Francis I*.

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several hundred letters from those churches, which have not previously been published in the *Calvini opera* or other works.

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CHAPTER 1

Calvin and the Early Reformation

David M. Whitford

John Calvin was born 10 July 1509. At the moment of his birth, nothing about him or his ancestry signaled that the small infant would one day be remembered along with Martin Luther as one of the two titans of the Reformation. His father, Gerard, was a minor official working for the Bishop of Noyon. Noyon is a cathedral city about sixty miles north of Paris. It had some claims to importance, as Charlemagne was crowned king of the northern Frankish kingdom there in 768 following the death of his father and the division of the kingdom into two parts. Perhaps even more importantly, Hugh Capet, founder of the Capetian dynasty was crowned King of France in Noyon in 987. It was a small city, but relatively prosperous, sitting between Paris and the Low Countries. It was a city flush with trade and merchants. Calvin's mother was the daughter of a local inn-keeper. As we shall see below, his father had ambitions for the young infant, but those ambitions were of an ordinary sort – rise a bit in status and prominence over his parents. No one would ever have thought the child would one day be famous.

Of course, in 1509, nothing about Martin Luther's life signaled fame or significance either. In March of that year, he completed his first degree in Bible – a significant step along the way to becoming a professor of Bible, but even that life lay years into the future. The week of Calvin's birth marked the fifth anniversary of Luther's decision to become a monk. He was slowly rising in responsibilities within the order and 1509 found him engaged as a temporary lecturer in philosophy at the brand-new University of Wittenberg. The university had been founded in 1502 by Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony. Luther arrived in the late fall of 1508 and would spend about one year there, filling a vacancy. At the end of that term, he returned to his home university and monastic house in Erfurt. In 1509, there was actually nothing to signal that he would ever return to Wittenberg, let alone have his name become nearly synonymous with the city and university. That would all begin to change in 1517, with the posting of the *Ninety-Five Theses*.

But in the fall of 1517, Calvin was eight. News of Luther likely reached Noyon sometime in 1518, but it is doubtful the young boy ever heard his name, even though it is likely that his father would have heard gossip at the cathedral about the unruly German. When did Calvin first hear his name? We do not know the

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answer to that. Likely sometime in the early 1520s when he moved to Paris to begin his formal education. But even in 1546, the year Luther died and a decade after Calvin first published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, it was not clear at all that Calvin would ever be remembered alongside Luther. He was about five years into his second sojourn as pastor in Geneva. But the "Calvin's Geneva" of which people speak today in high school and college lectures was not yet a reality in 1546. In 1546, his leadership role in Geneva remained contentious and problematic at times. By the time he died, of course, their two names were linked and have remained so to today.

In 2017, the Calvin Studies Society was presented a conundrum and an opportunity. Across North America and indeed in many places around the world, the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation would be marked in conferences and commemorations. The Society was scheduled to hold its biennial meeting in the spring of 2017. How, though, should a society devoted to the study of Calvin, his thought and his impact, mark a significant Reformation anniversary when the figure at hand would, five centuries ago, have merely turned eight? The opportunity we took was to think with purpose about what kind of an impact the early years of the Reformation – the Reformation taking place largely in Germany under the direction or influence of Luther during the 1510s and 20s – might have had on John Calvin as he studied in Paris, through his time in law school in Orléans and Paris, up to his early years in Geneva. What happened in the Early Reformation that reverberated in the life, actions, and thought of Calvin? When Martin Luther wrote the *Ninety-Five Theses*, the "Reformation" was not yet something with identifiable characteristics and contours. We might best see the *Ninety-Five* as one voice among a chorus calling for reform of the church in "head and members" that were written or circulated during the late medieval era. However, when Calvin became an "evangelical" or a "Luthérien" in the early 1530s, the Reformation had a shape and outline that can be identified. Calvin's decision to align himself with the Reformation meant asserting and supporting certain theological views. What was the intellectual and theological environment like in Paris of the 1520s? And how might that environment have exposed the young Calvin to voices calling for reform generally and then Luther more specifically? Were the debates of the early Reformation important to Calvin's theological development? Did such an impact have long-lasting effects? Those were some of the questions the organizers of the 2017 Calvin Colloquium put before the speakers. They are the questions that drive this volume. Some of the answers to those questions begin not in 1509, or 1517, or even the early 1530s when Calvin converted. The journey to Geneva began, in some ways, in 1515.

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In 1515, Calvin's life changed considerably. Luther's year was rather uneventful in comparison. Luther had moved to Wittenberg in 1511, finished his education, and formally took up the role of Old Testament professor in 1513. In 1515, Luther had finished his first course of lectures on the Psalms and moved on to the Book of Romans. Luther was an incredibly conscientious lecturer. We have his notes, so we know the degree to which he prepared. This speaks of a man, now 31, who was largely content with his life in the university. By contrast, the five-year-old Calvin suffered one of life's greatest losses when his mother died. Calvin would not speak or write about her much at all later in his life, but as William Bouwsma reminds us – the great theologian was also a human being, and the loss of a mother when still so young must surely have left its mark on the man he became. Bouwsma sees this loss in what he calls Calvin's "ambiguous" relationship to his father.[1] That seems to be a rather tenuous assertion. What is less tenuous, however, is the influence of the de Hangest family into whose care Calvin was placed by his father. The reasons for placing the young boy with another family are not truly known. It is likely that Calvin's intellectual abilities were already becoming apparent even at a young age – these things can be seen in five-year-olds. Placing John in a family that could nurture his budding intellect most likely played a role. It is also possible that caring for a young boy might well have been beyond Gerard's sense of his own abilities. Perhaps he thought placing him in a home with a caring mother-figure would be good for a child who just suffered such a loss. In any case, if Gerard was looking to support his education, that did work. It was via this relationship that Calvin received his earliest education at the local school in Noyon and was a few years later taken to Paris to continue his education. His education would be further enhanced when Gerard managed to secure a benefice for John when he was about twelve. The benefice provided a small income that could be applied to educational expenses. It was that benefice that allowed Calvin to move to Paris in August 1521, where he remained under the care of the de Hangest family.

While Calvin's life had progressed along a rather normal educational trajectory between 1515 and 1521, the same, of course, cannot be said of Luther. His *Ninety-Five Theses*, and especially the short pamphlet published as a more lay-focused defense of the positions he took in the *Theses*, launched him to national and international fame with stunning rapidity. By the time Calvin arrived in Paris, Luther was a well-known figure at the University. Calvin was

1 William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 11.

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first enrolled in the Collège de la Marche, where he was likely taught by Maturin Cordier. Cordier was a humanist, who was later denounced in Paris as a follower of Luther and who was forced to flee the city in 1534. Calvin would remain friends with Cordier the rest of his life. More important, however, than that friendship, was the humanist education to which Cordier exposed Calvin. In some ways, it is not an overstatement to note that the rest of Calvin's life would be devoted to the humanist ideals espoused by Cordier and others in Paris. Indeed, as the essay by James Farge details, the University of Paris was a deeply divided institution. Some of the leading humanist scholars of the age were at Paris – Jacques Lefèvre prominent among them. But it was also home to some of the continent's most conservative theologians. Those conservatives saw in humanism the seeds of Luther's heresy. Luther had used Lefèvre's commentaries on the Psalms and Romans in his lecture preparations, and it was Lefèvre who helped Luther reconceive of justification by grace alone, so their claims were not without some merit. Noël Béda was perhaps the most vociferous opponent of both humanism and Luther. In 1526, Béda would remark that "Luther is the great heretic, but Lefèvre is the master and Luther the disciple." Indeed, he continues, "Reuchlin, Lefèvre, Erasmus, Luther, Melanchthon, Oecolampadius and men of their ilk are all the same."[2]

It is thus a bit ironic that the young Calvin was first exposed to humanism at la Marche, but then soon transferred to the Collège du Montaigu. Montaigu was the home of Béda and thus a center of anti-humanist thought and work. Calvin did not choose to transfer there, at least that we know of, because of the strongly conservative theological positions of Béda and others. Rather, the college was much more prestigious and was a fertile ground for cultivating future leaders of the church. Gerard wished for John a prosperous and prestigious future in the church and Montaigu would help pave that path in a way that le Marche would not. The conservative nature of the education he gained there did not, however, squelch his affinity for humanism. The Paris in which Calvin was educated, thus, tilted between the poles of humanism and scholasticism. James Farge notes the degree to which these battles found their way into the royal palace. Farge helps clarify the reasons why Paris became an increasingly hostile home for humanists over the course of the 1520s and into the 1530s.

As humanists like Cordier and Lefèvre were denounced as sympathizers with or supporters of Luther, many were forced to flee Paris – as indeed Calvin would have to in late 1533. Cordier, ironically, would flee to Geneva. But many of them fled to Meaux, a small city about 35 miles outside of Paris. Protected

2 Noël Béda, *Annotationum Natalis Bede Doctoris Theologi Parisiensis in Jacobum Fabrum Stapulensem* (Cologne, 1526), 133r and 146r.

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by Marguerite of Navarre, King Francis I's sister, Meaux became an important center of humanist thought, but also harbored many pro-reform scholars and clerics. There is no evidence Calvin spent time in Meaux. However, many people who would play significant roles in his life would move through Meaux. In his essay, Jonathan Reid helps unravel the ways in which the early days of Meaux help us better understand Calvin's later hostile stance towards Nicodemism, a term first coined in the sixteenth century that refers to those who hide their true beliefs from the public – it comes from Nicodemus who snuck at night to visit Jesus. Michael Bruening's essay picks up where Reid's leaves off, and deepens our understanding of the ways in which prominent figures from Meaux continued to work and fight against Nicodemism. It seems that their experience of persecution, flight, and as refugees had effects that can be seen years and even decades later. Farge, Reid, and Bruening demonstrate the importance of a volume such as this. Too frequently, students of John Calvin are most familiar with his mature work, most notably his 1559 *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and his commentaries on the Bible. But what Reid, Bruening, and Farge demonstrate is that those early years in Paris helped form networks that would last throughout his life. They also helped to frame the ways in which Calvin understood many theological, ethical, and practical matters of reform.

The essay by Christoph Strohm continues this approach and highlights the ways in which early experiences had lasting effects upon Calvin the reformer, the exegete, and theologian. Strohm discusses perhaps one of the least-studied aspects of Calvin's life – his legal training. The episode around his father's decision to abandon a career in the church and instead devote his attention to civil law is rather well-known and discussed. Less attention is paid, however, to the specifics of that training. It was now, as a young law student, that Calvin returned in earnest and with lasting implications to humanist education. The skills and intellectual affections developed while a student in Orléans and Bourges, both centers of humanism – but with different emphases – can be seen not only in some of his more technical theological treatises, but throughout his exegetical works as well. He was trained to look at original context and meaning in laws. He applied those same standards, or at least aimed to, in his examinations of biblical texts and theological forebears such as Augustine or even Bernard of Clairvaux.

Not long after graduating with his degree in law, he published a scholarly edition of Seneca's *On Clemency*. He could now rightly claim the mantle of a humanist. The situation in Paris to which he had returned became increasingly less hospitable to evangelicals. His association with the Reformation was becoming more widely known. In short order, he made the decision to flee

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Paris for the relative safety of Basel. That the young Calvin was not shy in the estimation of his own abilities might be seen in his next literary undertaking. While he was in Basel, at 24 he completed the first edition of his life's greatest work – *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. *The Institutes* has suffered from a rather unfortunate title since Thomas Norton first translated it in the sixteenth century. In his translator's preface, Norton noted that he sought to "follow the [Latin] words so near as the phrase of the English tongue would suffer me." His translation of the title thus landed on the word *Institution* for *Institutio*. The result is a sense in which Calvin's work is more edifice than instructional manual. And students might be forgiven this belief when handed a heavy two-volume set of the final edition of 1559. But while *institutio* is the root word for the English word of Institute – say for example an Institute for the Study of Calvin, or the like, a better translation would be "instruction."

In 1536, Calvin's small book was a brief instructional manual in Christian teaching and proper biblical interpretation. The work took much of its inspiration – and its format – from Martin Luther's catechisms and Reformation teaching aids on the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed. The title *Institutio* is almost certainly a nod to the classical world, having been used by Horace, Quintilian, and as Farge notes, Emperor Justinian. The same echoing of the classical world is likely the reason Desiderius Erasmus used *institutio* more than once in titles. Calvin certainly would have known of Erasmus' works, both of which also focus on instructing people in the Christian life. Greta Kroeker's essay begins with the historical twist that found both Calvin and Erasmus in Basel at the same time. She notes that the two likely never met, but the personal and learned circles in which Calvin found himself travelling within the city were full of friends, acquaintances, and protégés of Erasmus. Her essay asks us to consider how Erasmus' humanist theology might have affected Calvin's developing theology. She traces the contours of Erasmus's thought and sees echoes in some of Calvin's later commitments.

Calvin left Basel just before the *Institutes* was published. He traveled to Italy for a short time but was again, as with Paris, forced to leave. Ironically, he then made a short trip to Paris, where he settled some family affairs and prepared to leave France permanently. He left Paris with his brother Antoine and Marie, their sister. He planned to return to Basel and settle them all there. Unfortunately, at the time, France and the Holy Roman Empire had revived hostilities making the route to Basel dangerous. Instead, they diverted around the moving armies; heading to Geneva first, and from there along Lac Léman to Bern, most likely, then on to Basel. But that short diversion led to his famous encounter with Guillaume Farel.

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The Reformation in Geneva did not begin, of course, with Calvin. By the time he arrived in Geneva, Farel had been working toward the Reformation of Geneva for nearly two years. It was with Farel that many of the circles of the early Reformation truly begin to intersect in Calvin's life. Farel was ten years older than Calvin. Like Calvin he studied in Paris, where he learned under Lefèvre. He became an Evangelical early in the 1520s and was among the earliest pro-Reformation figures to become involved in Meaux. Disappointed in the progress of the reforms there however, he left. Like some converts, he now disdained that which he had abandoned and did not understand why others clung to what he had repudiated. From Meaux he travelled to Basel, hoping to find allies there. He came into contact with pro-Reform circles there as well as the community of scholars around Erasmus. He and Erasmus, however, seem to have had a terrible row over the course church reform ought to take. For Farel, Erasmus most likely epitomized those who could see the faults in the church, but did not share his beliefs on the necessary remedies. Erasmus, of course, was the far more prominent figure in the city and if he did not ensure that Farel was told to leave the city, it is likely he played some role in making Basel less than hospitable for the young firebrand.

For the next few of years, Farel was rather itinerant. He was never a Catholic priest, but felt called to be a pastor and so took positions in a couple of places as either a pastor or teacher, including a short sojourn in Strasbourg. By 1535 he had made Geneva his home. Geneva's city leaders had already begun to explore the Reformation. Farel was appointed a pastor in the city. Within a few months, he had secured a formal endorsement of the Reformation and by August secured the prohibition of the Mass within the city. Not everyone endorsed these changes, of course. While the city leadership might have thought these changes wise and timely, many within the city were opposed to the changes advocated by Farel. One of the earliest and most vehement episodes of opposition centered around the Convent of St. Clare. The Poor Clares are a sister monastic order to the Franciscans. Their convent was within the city walls. We know of the depth of their opposition from one nun's record of the early Reformation in Geneva. Carrie Klaus examines Jeanne de Jussie's *Short Chronicle* and focuses our attention on one of the ways in which the Reformation transformed urban life – the soundscape. One of the things that the Reformation brought was a silencing of bells for liturgical hours throughout the day. For some, like Farel, this meant ending a sacrilegious cacophony, but for Jussie, it was more than just a quieting of bells; the silence bespoke the spiritual death of the city. As first Farel then later Calvin had been forced to flee Paris as religious refugees, now it was Farel and the city leaders who forced Jussie and her Poor Clare

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sisters to leave Geneva permanently. It is perhaps important to remember that both Protestants and Catholics created refugees and used the powers of coercion to further their religious aims.

It is sometimes difficult to imagine a world in which simply disagreeing with someone over a major (or sometimes even rather minor) theological position could mean being dispossessed of one's home and being sent away from one's community, but that did happen in the sixteenth century and both sides of the Reformation participated in it. Coercion is a blunt instrument. Later in his career, Calvin did resort to both soft and hard coercive methods – utilizing the pulpit and the Genevan Consistory and Small Council to further the cause of religious reform. But even then, Calvin preferred persuasion. Perhaps Calvin's first real foray into the art of theological persuasion came just months after the spectacular disaster of Nicholas Cop's lecture to the University of Paris, that advocated a pro-reform platform for the theological faculty and which resulted in both Cop and Calvin having to flee Paris. Just months later, in 1534, Calvin found himself engaged in a debate over soul sleep. Soul sleep is a theological position that addresses what happens to souls after death. Do they go immediately to heaven? Or, do they in some sense fall into a state like sleep until the final return of Christ and the Resurrection of all souls? In the *Psychopannychia*, Calvin confronts what he believed to be a patently un-Christian doctrine that had been stamped out by the early church. It was a pernicious belief, recently revived by some sectarian Christian groups, whom Calvin labelled as "Anabaptists." But, Brian Brewer asks us to consider how much Calvin actually knew about Anabaptists and their beliefs. Can one truly persuade those one doesn't completely understand? John Thompson reverses the order of accusation and discusses an episode in 1537 in which Calvin and Farel were accused of Arianism. In both essays, we confront the potential dangers faced by one who, on the one hand, wanted to reform perceived corrupt church practices in the present, but who did not believe the entirety of the church's life had been tainted by corruption. How did Calvin engage with the church's tradition both critically and constructively? By looking at a theological controversy that took place in 1537 Thompson charts how Calvin engaged with some of the church's oldest creeds and confessions as he sought to defend Farel and himself from the oldest Trinitarian heresy of the church. Of course, theological controversies did not disappear in the sixteenth century. They simply revived themselves in new places and at new times.

The controversy around soul sleep revived itself a few years later, after Calvin's sojourn in Strasbourg. Strasbourg was home to some Anabaptists and former Anabaptists. Looking at his writings after Strasbourg, Brewer highlights the ways in which Calvin's knowledge of his theological opponents informed

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his later debates with these opponents. Arianism, of course, revived itself in Calvin's most famous theological debate – and the most glaring use of coercion during his lifetime in Geneva: his debates with Michael Servetus and Servetus' eventual burning at the stake. But Amy Burnett tells the story of another controversy – this time around the Eucharist – that also came back around. The first episode of controversy focused on the fight between Luther and Huldrych Zwingli. When controversy around Communion erupted in the 1550s, now between Lutherans and those in Geneva, Calvin turned to the earlier controversy as he crafted his own retorts to Lutherans. Yet, both Brewer and Burnett point out that Calvin could be slow to learn not to depend exclusively on second-hand sources regarding one's theological rivals when launching into a debate. Yet, paradoxically, even with limited knowledge of his opponents, they demonstrate that Calvin could still be shaped by their works.

Calvin's debates with opponents on his left and right continued throughout his life. As Barbara Pitkin points out, however, like all humans who learn lessons both spiritual and experiential along the way, Calvin would come to reframe aspects of his theological project and the roles of divine presence and providence within it. The younger Calvin saw much of the impetus for his reformation works as part of an apologetic defense for his French king and fellow countrymen. He sought to demonstrate that the tenets of the reformed faith were biblical and necessary for the well-being of the church. Perhaps he hoped, at least initially, that Francis and France with him could still be turned and reformed. Eventually he hoped to at least reach the hearts and minds of some of his fellow countrymen, as he likewise ministered to new Protestants in Geneva and Strasbourg also finding their theological bearings. But ultimately, in retrospect, Calvin even reformed his own vision of and purpose for his work – no longer attempting to reform the French church. Instead, he saw himself leading a new movement apart from and in opposition to what he perceived as a stubbornly corrupt Roman church.

On the 400th anniversary of Calvin's birth, the City of Geneva commissioned a tribute to the man who by 1909 had become larger than life. The "Reformation Wall" stands in a beautiful park just down the hill from the cathedral where Calvin spent much of his adult life teaching and preaching. Calvin stands on the wall nearly three times the height of a man, carved in white and gray granite. He is flanked by Farel, Theodore Beza, and the Scottish Reformer John Knox. Their faces are all stern; their personas as unyielding as the granite. In a similar the way, most students of the Reformation first get to know Calvin through his refined, logical, even magisterial systematic theology, the 1559 final edition of the *Institutes*. Such a work can appear as unspoiled and unspotted work: a work in granite. But while works in granite may provide

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a fitting memorial, they are not an invitation. However, that final edition was, we know, revised over decades of ministry and reform efforts. And so, the supposed work of granite belies the younger Calvin, who found his bearings through various influences, enemies, dangers, exile, reluctant callings, debates and failures. A man not carved in stone, but living, growing, making mistakes and learning from them. This study into the young Calvin helps us not only to better understand the mature, nuanced theologian that he became, it helps us see Calvin as approachable, vulnerable, human.

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CHAPTER 2

Calvin, Erasmus, and Humanist Theology

Greta Grace Kroeker

John Calvin arrived in Basel in early 1535 during his flight from Paris – the same journey that would eventually find him in Geneva. Desiderius Erasmus also arrived in Basel during 1535. Calvin had published his treatise on Seneca by then and was working on the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but his was a career yet unforeseen. Erasmus was sick and frail. He was the greatest living humanist, but his friends and colleagues were now mostly gone. Erasmus was often bedridden and rarely left his room in the house of Hieronymus Froben. Calvin was immersed in the humanist culture of Basel and interacted with some of Erasmus's associates and proteges in the city, but the young Frenchman never met the aged titan. Calvin left Basel in the early spring; Erasmus too made plans to move on from Basel – but he developed dysentery and died in July 1536, just as Calvin was taking on more and more pastoral duties in Geneva. Did Erasmus and Calvin, though, share more than just the same city for a brief moment in 1535? This essay will argue that they did. In what follows, I will place Calvin and Erasmus together in the context of what should best be called a humanist theology. Understanding this shared theological heritage is important because it enhances our perception of the spiritual and intellectual circumstances that gave rise to the reformations in general, and Calvin in particular. Having then established a connection to humanist theology, I will explore the points of contact between Erasmus and Calvin in light of this shared foundation.

1 The Question of Humanist Theology

These aims immediately present a challenge: many scholars do not really agree that there was a "humanist theology" at all.[1] Even those who concede that such

1 See, e.g., John Monfasani, "The Theology of Lorenzo Valla," in his *Greeks and Latins in Renaissance Italy: Studies on Humanism and Philosophy in the Fifteenth Century* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), Essay XI. Although not specifically focused on the theological question, Monfasani also argues elsewhere that humanism should be interpreted as a common cultural inheritance of Protestants and Catholics in his *Renaissance Humanism from the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, Variorum Collected Studies, Book 1057 (New York: Rutledge, 2016), esp. Essay VI, "Renaissance Ciceronianism and Christianity," 361–79.

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a phenomenon existed struggle to find consensus on what, precisely, was its content.[2] Below, I will propose a definition that helps to explain the theological priorities that many Protestants observably shared with those humanist theologians who declined to embrace the reformations. But first it is necessary to grasp the reasons for widespread discomfort with the very notion of "humanist theology."

Resistance to the notion rests on a durable historiography of Renaissance humanism that argues, mainly on the basis of early Italian humanists, that the movement was not interested in religion *qua* religion. In other words, humanists were not attracted to the study of religion or theology as believers but rather as something akin to "scientists," as the term was subsequently understood. But what about the considerable evidence for religiosity among humanist luminaries? To account for this inconvenient material, historians like Paul Oskar Kristeller, Charles Trinkaus, and others were forced to bifurcate humanism into two distinct branches. These branches – one "Italian" and "Classical" and the other "Northern" and "Christian" – influenced one another while pursuing distinctly different aims,[3] or so the argument goes. This unfortunate oversimplification overlooks humanism's evolution and the expansion of interests among humanists to address the most pressing issues of the day,

2 E.g., see Amos Edelheit, *Ficino, Pico and Savonarola. The Evolution of Humanist Theology 1461/2–1498* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), where he writes: "The term 'humanist theology' which I use in this book, derives, as we have seen, from Garin's dialectical and sensitive approach to humanism, and can also be found in the studies of Charles Trinkaus, Salvatore Camporeale, John O'Malley, and John D'Amico," pp. 17–18, n. 39. Edelheit explains further, "Charles Trinkaus studied mainly the religious writings and expressions in the works of Petrarch, Coluccio Salutati, and Lorenzo Valla, and coined for their religious views the term 'rhetorical theology.' Salvatore Camporeale, working mainly on Valla's attitude to religion and its history, called it '*teologia umanistica*'. John O'Malley, working on sermons delivered in Rome in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, coined for them the term 'Renaissance theology.' All these names testify to a new kind of theology – essentially, to a new approach to religion, and especially to Christianity. I have chosen the term 'humanist theology' as more appropriate, since 'rhetorical theology' is somewhat limited to sermons and similar works of a popular nature, and 'Renaissance theology' may include non-humanist approaches, such as the theology practised by scholastic contemporaries of Ficino and Pico," pp. 23–24, and n. 49.

3 One of the earliest examples of this was Robert Murray who wrote in 1920, "The Renaissance crosses the Alps, and the snows of the mountains mark the sign of the Cross on its brow." Robert H. Murray, *Erasmus & Luther: Their Attitude to Toleration* (New York: Macmillian, 1920), 2. See also Charles Trinkaus, *"In Our Image and Likeness:" Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall Jr., eds. *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1948); Paul Oskar Kristeller and Eckhard Kessler, eds. *Humanismus und Renaissance*, 2 vols., trans. Renate Schweyen-Ott (München: Wilhels Fink Verag, 1981).

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including church reform, theology, the spiritual needs of Christendom, and ecclesiology. Instead, scholars have tended to categorize humanists either as "classicists" who resonated with pagan works, or "philologists" who happened to address religious themes as they wrestled with declensions and translations of scriptural and patristic texts.

Furthermore, this oversimplification has identified humanist interest in theology and scripture as part of the Renaissance's broader focus on the individual and the search for a moral philosophy that supported the "dignity of man." In this way, historians have shaped a narrative of humanism in which Christian humanists were interested in theology only insofar as it aided their development of a new, anti-scholastic philosophy of human morality, dignity, and individuality. They have consequently ignored the significant efforts of these same humanists to connect scripture and theology to the "dignity of man" and to moral philosophy throughout the period, thus denying humanists a stake in genuine Christian piety.[4]

Such enduring interpretations of humanism have yielded rather incoherent treatments of those figures who are labeled "Christian" or "Northern" Humanists, with Erasmus himself perhaps being the most prominent example. Erasmus's interpreters have often started from the assumption that his brand of humanism simply appropriated Italian-Renaissance tools like philology and historical criticism and applied them in some detached way to scripture and theology.[5] Such interpretations acknowledge the roots of Erasmian humanism in Lorenzo Valla and other Italians, but then proceed to graft the latter's alleged motives for "Christian" studies onto their "Northern" counterparts. Along this line, scholars like Charles Trinkaus characterized Lorenza Valla's "Critique of Scholastic Philosophy" as rooted in his interest in a "New Philosophy of Man," thereby dislocating his project from theology. This same dislocation was then applied to subsequent Christian humanists, both Northern and Italian. Gasparo Contarini's humanist studies, for example, have often been treated separately

4 See, for example, Trinkaus, *"In Our Image and Likeness"*; Cassirer et al., eds., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*; Kristeller and Kessler, eds. *Humanismus und Renaissance*; Erika Rummel, *Erasmus as Translator of the Classics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Silvana Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus als Ketzer: Reformation und Inquisition im Italien des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

5 See Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). Bentley makes important connections between Erasmus' interests in philology and the Italian Renaissance scholarship and he acknowledges Erasmus' interest in theological issues, but his primary focus has to do with Erasmus' application of Renaissance era methodologies to Biblical texts.

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from his concerns about church reform and doctrine.[6] Jacopo Sadoleto's humanism has often been cordoned off from his pleas for church unity and concerns about salvation.[7] Finally, Erasmus's studies of the classics have too often been divorced from his engagement in debates over the theology of the will and his promotion of a theology of grace, not to mention pastoral concerns and the quest for religious compromise.[8]

Historiographical trends that ignore or deny the existence of a Christian humanist theology have been hard to untangle and challenge, in part because of sixteenth-century efforts by humanists themselves. In the highly charged atmosphere of the sixteenth century, humanists often resorted to the defense that they were "not doing theology" in order to avoid any dangerous association with the Protestant reformers. Moreover, modern scholarly efforts to rescue humanists who did not become Protestant from the "stain" of heresy and so rehabilitate them as part of Catholic tradition have reinforced the view that humanists, even "Christian Humanists," were not theologians, but educators and philologists.[9]

The challenge, then, is to reconsider these interpretations and to discern humanist motives from the sources themselves. When humanists did engage with theological concerns, their efforts should be taken seriously on their own terms rather than recategorized or explained away. Such an approach not only promises to recover humanist self-understanding, but also explains the strident

6 For perspectives on Contarini, see Peter Matheson, *Cardinal Contarini at Regensburg* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972); and Elizabeth Gleason, "On the Nature of Sixteenth-Century Italian Evangelism: Scholarship, 1953–1978," *SCJ* 9 (1978): 3–25 and "Reading between the lines of Gasparo Contarini's Treatise on the Venetian State," *Historical Reflections* 15 (1988): 251–70.

7 For more on Sadoleto, see Wolfgang Reinhard, *Die reform in der Diozese Carpentras, unter den Bischofen Jacopo Sadoleto, Paolo Sadoleto, Jacopo Sacrati und Francesco Sadoleto, 1517–1596* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1966); Richard M. Douglas, *Jacopo Sadoleto: 1477–1547 Humanist and Reformer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959); W. Friedensburg, "Giovanni Morone and der Brief Sadolets an Melanchthon vom 17. Juni 1537," *ARG* 1, no. 4 (1904): 372–80; John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Kenneth Gouwens, "Recognition and Remembrance: Jacopo Sadoleto's Letters to Curial Friends, 1527–1529," in idem., *Remembering the Renaissance: Humanist Narratives of the Sack of Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 103–142.

8 For diverse perspectives on Erasmus, see C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: der Humanist als Theologe und Kirchenreformer* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); James Tracy, *Erasmus of the Low Countries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996; Charles Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1995).

9 For two different perspectives, see Lewis W. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963; and John Patrick Dolan, *The Influence of Erasmus, Witzel and Cassander in the Church Orinances and Reform Proposals of the United Duchees of Cleve during the Middle Decades of the 16th Century* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1957).

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opposition of their opponents. It would be rather odd for a scholastic theologian like Noël Béda to accuse Jacques Lefèvre d' Étaples of "doing theology," if indeed no such thing as "humanist theology" existed.[10] Other scholastic critics accused humanists of being ill-equipped, untrained, and unsanctioned to do theology. Or as one naughty critic may have put it, they were "sticking their sickles in another man's field."[11] The old guard, at least, believed that something also theological was afoot amidst all the philology and textual criticism.

We should take these humanists and their opponents at their word. A discernible humanist theology did arise in the first part of the sixteenth century. This simple premise allows for a far more cohesive explanation for how religious thought evolved in the sixteenth century than those narratives that reject the possibility of humanist theology. Acknowledging the intersection between theological and philological concerns also goes a long way toward explaining how those reformers who swam in humanistic currents became reformers in the first place. More to the point, it helps to explain how Calvin became Calvin.

Reformers, Protestant and Catholic alike, did not spring from scholastic clay fully formed and newly critical of the church, her theology, and her ecclesiology. They were deeply influenced by humanism – not only the movement's practices and tools, but even more its developing theology. In the case of the three figures mentioned earlier, humanist theology accounts for why Contraini's interest in classical humanism and philology led him to address scripture and its connections to church, why Sadoleto's early interest in pagan writers led him

10 In 1526, Béda denounced Lefèvre both within the University of Paris and to the Inquistion. Lefèvre fled to Strasbourg. On Béda's pursuit of Lefèvre, see James K. Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France: The Faculty of Theology of Paris, 1500–1543*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

11 The source of this particular paraphrase of Deuteronomy 23:23 may have been Crotus Rubeanus who had forewarned his humanist friend, Johann Reuchlin, of the latter's scholastic critics when Reuchlin had argued for the preservation of Hebrew texts in Europe unless they actually proved hostile to Christianity. Erika Rummel records of this 1519 citation that Rubeanus reported to Reuchlin that a monk "spluttered something about you, a jurist, having put your sickle into the theologians' crop." Rummel points out further that "*Letters of Obscure Men* offers an expanded version, turning the original account, which speaks of one theologian bringing an accusation against one specific individual, into a wholesale accusation. In the literary version, an unidentified theologian demands that 'no jurist or poet should write anything concerning theology, nor drag this new Latin of theirs into holy theology!' He gives two examples of trespassing: Reuchlin and 'another fellow, Proverbia Erasmi [sic] by name.' The catchphrase that labels the case is retained. 'They are not grounded in that discipline,' the theologian says. '[T]hey would for ever be putting their sickles into other men's corn.'" See Erika Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism in Reformation Germany*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12–13. See also *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* 2.33.

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to ponder scriptural authority and Christian governance, and of course why Erasmus' interest in pagan authors like Cicero led him to incorporate scriptural studies about the morality of Christians.

Regarding the last of these three, Erasmus scholars have traditionally acknowledged his participation in Reformation conflicts but have typically portrayed him as a reluctant Cincinnatus who longed to retire to the fields of philology. This is false. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, Erasmus was fully engaged in constructing theology throughout his career.[12] By 1527, he had developed his own theology of grace, which in turn brought him to a position on free will that was close but not identical to Luther's position. Erasmian theology, like that of many humanists at the time, was designed to accommodate multiple views and stave off a permanent fissure of Christendom. Erasmus's humanist colleagues made similar efforts to establish religious compromise and avoid schism. For example, Contarini developed theological models that offered a potential compromise on justification, while Sadoleto supported Protestant calls for ecclesiastical reform and offered views of salvation that encouraged Protestants to remain in line with Catholic tradition. Though there was never a Humanist Church, there was indeed a humanist theology.[13]

2 Defining Humanist Theology

With that background in mind, the time has come to offer a definition of humanist theology. The model proposed here will also reveal points of contact between the thought of Erasmus and Calvin.

Humanist theology grew out of a protest against scholastic methods and religious priorities and was influenced by the Renaissance ideal of human potential. This protest formed an essential characteristic of humanist theology. The Humanists generally disliked medieval scholasticism as both an educational paradigm and a methodology for philosophy and theology alike. Humanists sought to institute the *studia humanitatis* with its emphasis on the liberal arts, the return *ad fontes*, with an emphasis on philology, grammar and rhetoric. As such, they often ridiculed the scholastics for their "trite, inelegant,

12 See, e.g., Greta Grace Kroeker, *Erasmus in the Footsteps of Paul: A Pauline Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 134–146, esp. 143.

13 For a short discussion on this topic, see R. Ward Holder, review of *Collected Works of Erasmus: Controversies. Declarationes ad Censuras Lutetiae Vulgatas sub Nomine Facultatis Theologiae Parisiensis*, ed., trans. and annotated by Clarence H. Miller, *Erasmus Studies* 35 (2015): 94–97.

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and pointless teaching and writing."[14] Humanists wished to promote the study of ancient languages in order to read classical texts and the Bible. For their part, the "schoolmen" (as the humanists called them) disdained the humanists both as professionally incompetent to discuss theology and philosophy and as unorthodox.

As Charles Nauert has explained, humanists also rejected the scholastics' insistence "that only their own traditional method, based on dialectical argumentation and closely guided by the writings of early generations of scholastic theologians, could provide sure guarantees of orthodoxy in doctrine and catholicity in religious practice."[15] As it turned out, they may have been right. As soon as the humanists gained enough ground to institute their educational and theological methods, some Christians began employing those methods to challenge Catholic doctrine and practice.

Not only were scholastic and humanistic methods and educational practices at odds, so too were the *foci* and priorities of their religious studies. Humanists had "challenged the whole enterprise of rational philosophy, the scholastic aspiration toward attainment of absolute truth."[16] In fact, humanists doubted whether it was even possible to attain absolute truth, and instead they sought to explore the capacity of human beings to think, to be good, to know, to understand, to seek. In short, humanists were more interested in "the attainment of moral rather than metaphysical certitudes … Humanists did not just challenge the conclusions of their scholastic critics. They denied the appropriateness of the questions being investigated and the validity of the types of proof offered."[17]

Humanists' questions naturally turned to the religious nature of knowledge and what it implied about the Christian life. They valued usage over logic, preaching over lecturing, sacred text over syllogisms.[18] As the sixteenth century progressed, humanism increasingly turned to the questions of how these emphases on usage, preaching, and sacred text intersected with spirituality, faith, God, and the church. As a result, a wide-ranging humanist theology developed that nourished the spiritual thirst characteristic of the early sixteenth century and offered a springboard for theological method, textual study, and pastoral practice for those interested in ecclesial reform and renewal.

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14 Charles G. Nauert, "Humanism as Method: Roots of Conflict with the Scholastics," *SCJ* 29, no. 2 (1998): 427–438, see especially, 430.

15 Nauert, "Humanism as Method," 431.

16 Nauert, "Humanism as Method," 432.

17 Nauert, "Humanism as Method," 433.

18 See Nauert's discussion of More in Nauert, "Humanism as Method," 435.

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The humanist theology that emerged from this critique of scholasticism and from Renaissance ideals of human dignity and morality had many characteristics, but three are fundamental. First, humanist theology evinced a devotion to scripture as the primary guide for the Christian life. Humanist theology depended on scripturally-based critiques of church abuses and false theology. Second, humanist theology privileged the historical church, especially the church of the early centuries, as interpreters of scripture. Finally, humanist theology maintained a commitment to the importance of rhetoric. Its practitioners recognized that Christians craved and deserved a living gospel, which from their perspective must be invigorated by finely crafted language, textual access, and an emphasis on moral living through spiritual renewal. By examining these three elements in the work and thought of Erasmus and Calvin, it becomes clear that while there were obvious differences in their reform programs, they shared many connections to the circles that created and sustained humanist theology. In other words, the theological road between Rotterdam and Geneva may be better traveled than many historians have assumed.

Beginning, then, with humanist theology's *devotion to scripture*, Erasmus labored throughout his career to furnish his fellow Christians, the reformers among them, with the tools for scriptural analysis upon which to build both critiques of the church and challenges to false doctrine. Erasmus modeled a way to critique, study, and interpret scripture that was in line with humanist concerns and spoke to the spiritual thirst of many early modern Christians. The *Annotations* that accompanied his famous *Novum Instrumentum* provided a philological commentary on the Vulgate, yet they were also theological in nature. Erasmus's readers encountered a careful theological exegesis of the New Testament that incorporated and privileged patristic and medieval sources. The *Paraphrases* subsequently reflected those influences in narrative form.

Erasmus used the *Annotations* and the *Paraphrases* to make an important theological statement: just as the biblical text itself was fundamental to the foundation of the faith, its accuracy, interpretation, and availability were just as essential to the maintenance and health of that faith. This conviction motivated Erasmus's labors to spread the gospel through biblical scholarship. As he wrote to John Fisher in 1516 after the publication of the *Novum Instrumentum*: "… I am delighted to know that my labours, such as they are, find some favour with men of good will. Many are taking this opportunity to read the Scriptures who would never read them otherwise, as they themselves admit…."[19] Erasmian

19 Erasmus, "Letter to John Fisher" (Ep. 413) in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 3: *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 298 to 445, 1514 to 1516*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 295.

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reform was grounded in the central act of studying and presenting the biblical text in the hope that others would find renewal in reading it. This sense of mission reflected both the cultural and spiritual environs that had nurtured the young Erasmus's development. As Preserved Smith argued, "the Renaissance and the Reformation were … really one."[20] The Renaissance "amalgamated" Latin, Jewish, and classical thought and so was armed with an arsenal of ideas, strategies, analogies, and arguments for religious thought and religious change. Erasmus put these formidable armaments in the service of reform.

No less than for Erasmus, Calvin's humanist training provided him with the philological skills "to recover a biblical understanding of Christianity."[21] He too critiqued the scholastic reliance on reason over the Bible, which, as Bouwsma argued, "spoke uniquely to the heart … As a humanist, Calvin was a biblical theologian, prepared to follow Scripture even when it surpassed the limits of human understanding."[22]

Riemer Faber, meanwhile, has shown that it was not merely in perspective but in action that Calvin paralleled Erasmus' approach to Scripture. He has demonstrated the connections between Erasmus' *Annotations* and Calvin's Commentary on Galatians, noting that "while the confessional differences between" them "are obvious, the text-critical and exegetical principles are held in common."[23] Both humanists privilege the Greek text over the Latin and "share the exegetical principle of the *sensus germanus* or *literalis*," as well as "the principle of clarity (*claritas*) or transparency of meaning (*perspicuitas*) in translation and commentary." Finally, "the principle of simplicity (*simplicitas*) or brevity (*brevitas*)" is applied by both not "only to commentary but also to translation."[24]

Even when one turns to formal theological doctrines or dogmas, T.H.L. Parker has found "only four examples in all the New Testament commentaries in which Calvin disagrees explicitly with Erasmus over doctrinal matters."[25] Further,

20 Preserved Smith, *Erasmus: A Study of His Life, Ideals and Place in History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1923; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 2.

21 William J. Bouwsma, "Explaining John Calvin," *The Wilson Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1989): 68–75. Here page 71.

22 Bouwsma, "Explaining John Calvin," 71–72. Cf. Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, trans. David Foxgrover and Wade Provo (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 178–81.

23 Riemer Faber "The Influence of Erasmus' *Annotationes* on Calvin's Galatians Commentary," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* [DRCH] 84 (2004): 277. See also R. Ward Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin's First Commentaries* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 87–138, who traces Calvin's frequent use of humanist tools in his exegetical practices in his first commentaries on scripture.

24 Faber, "The Influence of Erasmus' *Annotationes*," 278–79.

25 Quoted in Faber, "The Influence of Erasmus' *Annotationes*," 280.

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"Erasmus raised, and sought to answer, the question of the relationship between grammar and theology."[26] Calvin's theology developed in light of both Erasmus's questions and Erasmus's humanist approach to answering them.

Next, humanist theology's *privileging of the church fathers as interpreters of scripture* often translated into efforts at compromise and efforts to avoid schism. This feature was most obvious in those humanists who declined to become Protestants. As Hilmar Pabel has pointed out, "for Erasmus Scripture was not only sacred literature; it also was the source of sacred history, a history he esteemed more than the secular works of the great classical historians … The *Paraphrases* present us with an approach to Erasmus's historical method, for in them he had to understand and relate sacred history."[27] Erasmus himself clarified how he viewed the early church as a theological model for his contemporaries. He wrote in the dedication to the 1524 *Paraphrase on Acts* that "I could not fail to compare the very turbulent and corrupt state of the church in our own day with the kind of church of which Luke has given us such a wonderful picture in this book."[28] Erasmus employed the early church's example to invigorate his readers' spiritual piety. As Pabel notes, Erasmus was "re-presenting the scriptural text to make it relevant to his audience."[29]

This emphasis on the historical church revealed itself in Erasmus's oft-expressed admiration for specific patristic writers. According to Jan den Boeft, the Fathers embodied for the humanist "*literarum eruditio* and *vitae sanctimonia*. Time and again [Erasmus] would express his admiration of this felicitous union, recommending it as a salutary remedy for the ecclesiastical troubles of his time."[30] The list of his Patristic editions alone (Jerome, Cyprian, Arnobius the Younger, Hilary of Poitiers, John Chrysostom, Irenaeus, Ambrose, Athanasius, Augustine, Lactanius, Basil of Caesarea, and Origen) attests to his devotion. But it was not merely a scholarly attraction that led Erasmus to the

26 Faber, "The Influence of Erasmus' *Annotationes*," 281. Faber here also observes that "this point is demonstrated by Jean-Claude Margolin." See Margolin, "The Epistle to the Romans (Chapter 11) According to the Versions and/or Commentaries of Valla, Colet, Lefèvre, and Erasmus," in *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. David Steinmetz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 150–51.

27 Hilmar M. Pabel, "Retelling the History of the Early Church: Erasmus's Paraphrase on Acts," *Church History* 69, no. 1 (March 2000): 64.

28 Quoted by Hilmar Pabel, in "Retelling," 65.

29 Pabel, "Retelling," 75.

30 Jan den Boeft, "Erasmus and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West, vol. 2: From the Carolingians to the Maurists,* ed. Irena Backus (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 537.

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Fathers.[31] As Irena Backus has shown, the Patristic editions represented to Erasmus "a valuable ethical model," provided a template for powerful Christian rhetoric, and supported Erasmus's goal of offering a "reform program so as to reconvert the church to its early doctrine and language." As the aging Erasmus witnessed his dream of a reformed but unified church wither, he nonetheless held out hope that the Fathers could "show the relative and fluid nature of the teaching they contained," which left space for both doctrinal disagreements and Church unity.[32]

Calvin shared Erasmus's focus on the early church, and his dedication to the humanism of the former influenced his reliance on the latter. The apostolic church served the Genevan as the model for his contemporary Christian community. Though he understood that no exact replica of the early church could be erected in the sixteenth century, he was "concerned to demonstrate that" the reformed churches "embodied its spirit."[33] Calvin insisted that "this principle has prevailed in the church from the beginning and ought to prevail today, that the servants of God should teach nothing which they have not learned from him…."[34] Similarly, Bruce Gordon has argued that, for Calvin, the Fathers "were … witnesses from a 'primitive and purer Church', though everything they said had to be subjected to the rule of scriptures. The Fathers belonged to a period that Calvin regarded as the 'golden age' of the Church, approximately the first five centuries after the death of Christ, a time when there was general consensus about doctrine and when the Church had not yet been disfigured by the papacy."[35] Calvin's own comment on Ezekiel 26:18 further illuminates the point:

> Hence the tradition of the fathers must be examined; and it is a mark of prudent discretion to observe what they contain, and whence they proceed. If we discover that they have no other tendency than to the pure worship of God, we may embrace them; but if they draw us away from the pure and simple worship of God, if they infect true and sincere religion by their own mixtures, we must utterly reject them.[36]

31 Irena Backus, "Erasmus and the Spirituality of the Early Church." in *Erasmus' Vision of the Church*, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, ed. Hilmar M. Pabel (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1995), 95.

32 Backus, "Erasmus and the Spirituality," 114.

33 Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 126.

34 Calvin, *Institutes* IV.8.5.

35 Gordon, *Calvin*, 107. Gordon here cites Calvin's Commentary on Ezekiel 20:18 via A.N.S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 29.

36 Gordon, *Calvin*, 107 again via Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers*, 36.

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Johannes van Oort argues that Calvin's approach to the Fathers was "in keeping with the humanist principle of *ad fontes*," and that he used them primarily in his polemical arguments.[37] Further, he notes that "Calvin's approval of the Fathers emphasizes the period from AD 325 to AD 451, the period of the first four general and dogma-defining councils. After 'that golden age' of 'the primitive and purer Church there was progressive decline to contemporary darkness."[38] Finally, van Ort cites David Steinmetz to suggest that Calvin's esteem for the Fathers steadily increased in the years between 1540 and 1556. "This is reflected not so much by the increased by number of citations of them, but by the tacit adoption of their interpretations. Thus, as Calvin's estimation of the fathers increased, so too did his respect for the greatest contemporary admirer, Erasmus."[39]

On the latter note, arguably the most striking point of contact between Erasmus and Calvin is their shared interest in John Chrysostom. I have shown elsewhere that as Erasmus became more and more concerned with the impending divisions in the church, he came to rely on Chrysostom for both his *Annotations* and his *Paraphrases*. Calvin shared this interest in Chrysostom, even as he frequently reserved the right to disagree with him.[40]

Lastly, it will be recalled that humanist theology sought to institute a rhetorically rich and pastoral form of Christianity that recognized the need for a living Gospel. For Erasmus, this trend manifested itself in his consistent focus on spiritual renewal. This aspect of the humanist's reform agenda emerged early in his career and he articulated it in countless formats.

Erasmus took up the late medieval and early modern themes of spiritual renewal and virtuous living and reshaped them with humanist tools. He used the teachings of the church Fathers, the wisdom of the classical past, the clues of philology, and the rhetorical strategies of the Romans to discourage arrogance and to encourage his readers, as he did in the *Enchiridion*, to "search for the spiritual meaning, and [there to] find nothing more sweet or succulent."[41] The Fathers in particular provided rhetorical and pastoral models for spiritual

37 Johannes van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Backus, 697.

38 Johannes van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," 698.

39 Faber, "The Influence of Erasmus' *Annotationes*," 281.

40 See, for example, J.R. Walchenbach, *John Calvin as Biblical Commentator* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock), 2010. See also, Alexandre Ganoczy and Klaus Müller, *Calvins handschrifliche Annotationen zu Chrysostomus: Ein Beitrag zur Hermeneutik Calvins* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981).

41 Erasmus, "The Handbook of the Christian Soldier" (*Enchiridion militis christiani*), trans. Charles Fantazzi here via *Collected Works of Erasmus: Spiritualia*, vol. 66 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 32.

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growth. Elsewhere, he urged his readers, "If you prefer to be strong spiritually rather than clever in debate, if you seek sustenance for the soul rather than mere titillation of the intellect, read and reread the ancient commentator in preference to all others, since their piety is more proven, their learning more profuse and more experienced, their style neither jejune nor impoverished, and their interpretation more fitted to the sacred mysteries."[42] In other words, Erasmus exhorted Christians to find meaning in tradition, find inspiration in the scripture, and to find sustenance in pastoral care.

Erasmus' theology also employed rhetoric to clarify the Bible for a wider audience. He wrote in the *Enchiridion* that "the divine Spirit has his own peculiar language and modes of speech, which you must learn through careful observation. Divine wisdom speaks to us in baby-talk and like a loving mother accommodates its words to our state of infancy. It offers milk to tiny infants in Christ, and herbs to the sick. But you must hasten to grow so that you may receive solid food. It lowers itself to your lowliness, but you on your part must rise to its sublimity. It is unnatural to remain always an infant, and it is the height of indolence to be continually infirm."[43] To correct this spiritual infancy and infirmity, Erasmus proffered his own instruction. To be sure, the centerpiece of this theological meal was scripture, but his works also contained delicacies to assuage his age's spiritual hunger. Hilmar Pabel has explained how Erasmus "did not limit himself to annotating the New Testament. Scriptural interpretation was not an end in itself but a means to the pastoral ministry of preaching. The *Paraphrases* on the New Testament constitute the practical, pastoral application of Erasmus's scholarship in the service of promoting piety. In the *Paraphrases*, Erasmus created a new genre of literature, one that conveyed afresh the narrative and teaching of *sacrae litterae* according to the principles of Erasmian theology and rhetoric."[44]

Pastoral care and rhetoric were also central to Calvin's reforming project. The reformer preached an astonishing "4000 sermons in the 13 years after his return to Geneva."[45] Certainly the scripture remained the central authority, but "its message … could not be presented as a set of timeless abstractions; it had to be adapted to the understanding of contemporaries according to the rhetorical principle of decorum – i.e. suitability to time, place, and audience."[46] Christian rhetoric could and would "stimulate human beings to active reform

42 Erasmus, "The Handbook of the Christian Soldier" (*Enchiridion*), 35.
43 Erasmus, "The Handbook of the Christian Soldier" (*Enchiridion*), 35.
44 Pabel, "Retelling," 64.
45 Bouwsma, "Explaining John Calvin," 73.
46 Bouwsma, "Explaining John Calvin," 72.

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of both themselves and the world."[47] Preaching with rhetorical confidence fulfilled the pastoral obligation to expound on theology. The pulpit provided "more than mere instruction." Rather, "[it] brought together learning and worship."[48] Proper rhetorical strategies were essential to this marriage of scripture and learning.

Drawing on the earlier work of Charles Trinkaus, Kirk Essary has pointed out that the humanist concept of "theologica rhetorica" helps to illuminate points of contact between Calvin and Erasmus. They both reflect what Essary describes as "a moral-philosophical way of doing exegetical theology: the reader must approach the subject matter with epistemological humility and with an interest in cultivating piety, and the preacher must preach a humble gospel, accessible to all."[49] For Calvin, "the preaching of the gospel must be concerned with truth … [and] artificial adornments must not jeopardize this concern."[50] In general, their approach to scripture evidences a common goal: to use rhetoric and eloquence to hold up for believers how Scripture, and Jesus's life in particular, provides a model for Christians to follow. Erasmus for his part looked for ways to highlight "Christ's humility so as to set forth a model for the actions of his follower."[51] Both he and his counterpart in Geneva endeavored "to navigate the inevitable tension which arises out of an assertion of divine accommodation, between truth and language."[52]

3 Conclusion

This essay has explored three aspects of humanist theology in order to uncover the intellectual and spiritual foundations shared by Erasmus and Calvin. Humanist theology was rooted in scripture, devoted to the early church, and confident in the power of rhetoric to stimulate piety. These commitments were in part a reaction to the perceived deficiencies of scholastic theology and pedagogy. Yet humanism was also procreative in that it developed new methods of connecting with the historical church and the scriptures amidst the spiritual needs, concerns, and battles of the early sixteenth century. The movement's

47 Bouwsma, "Explaining John Calvin," 71.

48 Gordon, *Calvin*, 71.

49 Kirk Essary, "Milk for Babes: Erasmus and Calvin on the Problem of Christian Eloquence," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 16, no. 3 (Nov. 2014): 249.

50 Essary, "Milk," 258.

51 Kirk Essary, "The Radical Humility of Christ in the Sixteenth Century: Erasmus and Calvin on Philippians 2:6–7," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68, no. 4 (2015): 406.

52 Essary, "Milk," 260.

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theology was also flexible enough to accommodate both those trying to prevent schism and those building a new, or renewed, Christian church. Clearly Erasmus and Calvin did not share the same vision of reform. They had fundamentally different views of what human potential could and should achieve. And yet they employed a common set of methods, texts, and strategies to build their respective theologies. In short, they shared a humanist theology.

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CHAPTER 3

The Intellectual, Political, and Legal Milieu in France during the Life of John Calvin

James K. Farge

In 1929 the French historian Lucien Febvre published an important article entitled "The Origins of the French Reformation – A Badly-put Question."[1] One of the memorable phrases in it states that France in the sixteenth century was "in a long period of magnificent religious anarchy."[2] This was a captivating way for him to suggest that – at least up until the decrees of the Council of Trent in 1563 – there were so many different opinions about religious doctrines that it was impossible to know which were orthodox, or true, and which were heretical, or false. Febvre then went on to say that the topic still needed a lot of work – and that the work must be done by historians, not theologians. As an historian, my years of research in the archives of the University of Paris and of the Parlement of Paris have led me to conclude that Febvre's phrase about "religious anarchy" in France needs revision. True, the different opinions about religious doctrines and ideas about how to reform the church may have amounted to a certain "anarchy" among dissidents; but in those pre-Cartesian, pre-Enlightenment days, there was no separation of church and state. French authorities had no doubt about what was orthodox and what was heretical. Heresy was not merely a sin; it was a crime. The Parlement of Paris, which was the supreme court of justice in the kingdom, consulted the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris to decide what was orthodox and what was heretical.[3]

1 In Peter Burke, ed., *A New Kind of History and other essays: Lucien Febvre*, trans. K. Folca (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973; repr. New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 44–107. Original: "Une question mal posée: Les origines de la Réforme française et le problème des causes de la Réforme," *Revue historique* 161 (1929); repr. Lucien Febvre, *Au coeur religieux du XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Ecole pratique des hautes études, 1957; repr. Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1967), 3–70.

2 Burke, ed., *A New Kind of History*, 86.

3 For one of many places where this is enunciated in the Parlement's registers, see the expression "laquelle seroit scandaleuse et de perilleuse ouverture pour revocquer en doubte les jugements et determinacions de la faculté tres necessaire pour obvier aux damnees et folles oppinions qui ont pullulé puys aucun temps ença contre les determinacions et doctrines de l'eglise catholique … et par ce dict qu'il est besoing y donner ordre et que la Court de ceans se y employe, de sorte que l'auctorité et jugement de la faculté de theologie, qui ont esté par cy devant de si grosse et grande reputacion, soient gardez et entretenu" via James K. Farge,

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So did most church authorities and eventually so did King Francis I. This is not to say that they were right, but only that what French authorities believed and acted upon constituted the law of the land and, therefore, what was "orthodox." As a result, French citizens who held doctrines that had been declared heretical had three choices: they could live their religious beliefs in secret, as many thousands did or tried to do; they could profess their beliefs openly and risk persecution and even execution, as did Jacques Pauvant, Louis de Berquin, and many others;[4] or they could leave France, as did Guillaume Farel, John Calvin, and many others. It is in that context that I will attempt to describe what France was like – intellectually, politically, and legally – in the time of John Calvin.

First in order, then, is the intellectual aspect of France as it directly affected Calvin. He arrived to begin his studies in Paris in 1521 when he was twelve years old – not in 1523, as most of his biographers have held.[5] To the contemporary reader, that seems early to arrive at a university; but it was, in fact, the normal age for a novice student in Paris. Like other beginners, Calvin spent his first fifteen months or so perfecting the Latin grammar and rhetoric that he would need for his courses in the university's Faculty of Arts. Then, in the Fall term of 1522, he enrolled in the Collège de Montaigu, an institution known for its intellectual and disciplinary rigor. There, for three and a half years, he studied philosophy, which consisted principally in the study of logic and natural philosophy (that is, Aristotelian science). Next, as was required, he would have spent a year and a half as a student teacher under the supervision of a master whom he had chosen. Finally, in March 1527 he took the oath that was required of all candidates for the Master of Arts degree to respect and obey the statutes and privileges of the University of Paris and to be true to its teachings.[6] Calvin

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ed., *Religion, Reformation, and Repression in the Reign of Francis I: Texts from the Parlement of Paris, 1515–1547*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015), 1:308 [hereafter Farge, *RRR*].

4 On Berquin see James K. Farge, "Les procès de Louis de Berquin: Episodes dans la lutte du Parlement de Paris contre l'absolutisme royal," *Histoire et Archives* 18 (2005): 49–77.

5 For an earlier discussion surrounding the dating of this event, see T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006), 193–194. The dating of 1521 is confirmed by this heretofore unknown document, since it accounts mathematically for the fifteen months of grammar and rhetoric, the five years of study and directed teaching (otherwise known as the *quinquennium*), leading to Calvin's taking the oath in 1527 that was required for the M.A. (see note 6).

6 I discovered this only by sheer luck: Twenty years ago, as I was transcribing the names of students inscribed in the register of the university rector as they took that oath, I discovered this solitary piece of evidence documenting Calvin's presence in the University of Paris. He is there listed as "*Joannes Cauvin, bursarius diocesis Noyonensis*" (BnF, lat. 9951, fol. 142v).

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probably spent the next academic year, 1527–28, as a beginner in the study of theology, as that was his father's wish. But in 1528 his father changed his mind and told him to study law, which he dutifully did for the next three years at the universities of Orléans and Bourges.

We must now look a little closer at Calvin's courses of study. His initial work in Latin grammar and rhetoric would prove to be very fruitful in achieving the clarity and conviction of his later writings. But what about those five years of study in the Faculty of Arts? They would have immersed Calvin in the structured approach to learning, teaching, and writing that we today call "scholasticism." It had emerged in the twelfth century with the discovery in the Latin West of translations of Aristotle's books on logic dating from three centuries before Christ. The whole purpose of Aristotle's logic was calculated to expand knowledge and to arrive rationally at truth. It involved learning how to employ a set number of pre-determined categories and distinctions in order to arrive at a rational, convincing conclusion to any question that might arise. Scholasticism was the standard method of teaching and learning in European universities for several centuries. It produced great works of philosophy and theology by men such as Anselm, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, and many others whose works are still studied today. In Calvin's own time the study of logic depended heavily on the more modern commentaries on logic written by John Buridan, Peter of Spain, and the Scots master John Mair (or Major).[7]

By the fifteenth century, however, a growing number of scholars were not satisfied with scholasticism. They proposed instead that the university curriculum should consist primarily in reading and learning from the great classical authors – Virgil, Cicero, Livy, Tacitus, and others. They argued that this would give the students the rhetorical skills and human sensibilities that would help them to produce a better society – a better world. They called this approach *studia humanitatis*. We refer to it today as "humanism" and to its practitioners

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The same document (at fol. 81v) reveals – also for the first time – that Calvin's older brother Charles had preceded him at the University of Paris by five years.

7 On Mair's works of logic see Alexander Broadie, *The Circle of John Mair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); on his career and his theology see John T. Slotemaker and Jeffrey C. Witt, eds., *A Companion to the Theology of John Mair* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), especially Appendix C: James K. Farge and Ueli Zahnd, "An Analytic Bibliography by Name and Subject," 376–89. Among others, François Wendel and T.F. Torrance have argued that Calvin studied under Major. See, François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, translated by Philip Mairet (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 19, and T.F. Torrance "La philosophie et la théologie de Jean Mair ou Major, de Haddington," *Archives de Philosophie* 32 (1969): 531–47 and 33 (1970): 261–93. This claim was rebutted by Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1987), 174–178.

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as "humanists." Calvin would have been exposed to humanism principally in the law schools of Orléans and Bourges, where the study of Roman law was the rage. In 1532 he published a commentary on Seneca's *De clementia* – a decidedly humanist text. In 1535 his choice of the title "Institutes" for his fundamental work on the Christian religion was quite likely borrowed from the Emperor Justinian's textbook for beginners in Roman law, the *Institutes*.

Humanism developed first, of course, in Italy, but we are concerned here with France, where the most influential humanists in Calvin's time were Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, Guillaume Budé, and Desiderius Erasmus. Lefèvre, Erasmus, and others set their goals not only on producing a better secular society but also on reforming the church. They are often therefore known as "Christian humanists." They argued that the study of the early Fathers – Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Origen, and others – would help remove some of the non-scriptural doctrines and devotions that had developed in the medieval church. They also wanted to produce tri-lingual scholars who could investigate the textual integrity of the Latin Vulgate by comparing it to Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible. But this goal – submitting Bible texts to philological probing – was absolutely abhorrent to the scholastic theologians. For them, to call into question the integrity of the divinely inspired Bible text that had been in use for more than a thousand years was not merely foolish: it was blasphemous. In their eyes such meddling with the Bible by persons who were trained in languages but not in theology would corrupt the texts, not correct them; and translating the Bible into vernacular languages would lead to endless quarreling about how to interpret its passages – something better left, the scholastics maintained, to trained and certified theologians. We might say they feared Lucien Febvre's "religious anarchy."[8]

We don't know whether Calvin, while still an adolescent coping with scholastic philosophy, read the works of Lefèvre or Erasmus or any other Christian humanist; but he could not have failed to be aware of the increasingly bitter struggles between the scholastic doctors and their humanist critics. This was especially true because the *éminence grise* in the Collège de Montaigu where Calvin was enrolled, a doctor of theology named Noël Béda, was also the syndic, or director, of the Faculty of Theology that was the very stronghold of scholasticism. For fifteen years Béda led the attack on Lefèvre, Erasmus, and other humanists because he believed that their critique of traditional

8 Defending the Vulgate Bible accounted for most of Noël Béda's censures of Erasmus, Lefèvre d'Étaples, and other humanists, notably in his *Annotationum ... in Jacobum Fabrum Stapulensem libri duo et in Erasmum Roterodamum liber unus qui ordine tertius est* (Paris: Josse Bade, 1526; repr. Cologne: Petrus Quentell, 1526).

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doctrine and devotion had laid the foundation for the perceived heresies that appeared spectacularly in 1520 with three radical treatises of Martin Luther.[9] Calvin would certainly have been aware of the university's condemnation of Luther in April 1521. He would have known, too, of the arrest in 1523 of the young evangelical humanist Louis de Berquin, who was devoted equally to Erasmus and Luther, and of the more serious proceedings against Berquin in 1526. And Calvin would surely have been aware of the Faculty of Theology's 1523 attack on the evangelical preachers whom Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet enlisted to help reform the church in his diocese. That attack culminated in a lengthy, dramatic court battle in 1525 that saw Briçonnet rebuked and his preachers dispersed.

Nor can we know whether such events in the mid-1520s had already begun to inspire in Calvin an interest in the evangelical cause, especially since his father was still in the good graces of the cathedral clerics for whom he worked in Noyon. Calvin was more likely to have moved in that direction in the early 1530s, after his father had fallen from those good graces and then died excommunicate. He tells us that the actual decision to break with Catholicism in 1533 was a sudden one.[10] That break would be eminently clear when, as a refugee from France in 1535, he began to compose his fundamental work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

This is a convenient point to turn our attention from the intellectual to the political ambiance in France, because – as is well known – Calvin put at the head of his *Institutes* a "Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France." In it he tries to convince the king that evangelicals were more in line with the early church Fathers than were their opponents – scholastic theologians and judges in the Parlement – who held to non-scriptural traditions that contradicted true religion. He ends by urging the king not to act on their false charges of sedition but to know that, regardless of his decision, the reformers would be vindicated

9 *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, an attack on the corruption of the church and the abuses of its authority; *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, his criticism of the sacramental system of the Catholic church; and *The Freedom of a Christian* that presents Luther's doctrine of justification by faith. See LW 44:126–217; 36:11–126; and 31:334–359, respectively.

10 The dating of Calvin's "conversion" is a subject of considerable debate. T.H.L. Parker places it in 1529 or 1530 (Parker, *John Calvin*, 199–203) while Ganoczy views the conversion less as an event and more as a process (Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 241–266). Further, it has been argued that Calvin's use of *subita* to describe his conversion does not mean "suddenly" but rather "unexpectedly." See Heiko Oberman, "*Subita conversio*: The Conversion of John Calvin," in *John Calvin and the Reformation of the Refugees* (Geneva: Droz, 2009), 131–48.

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by God.[11] We don't know whether King Francis ever read Calvin's address to him or if he was even informed about it. We can only say that the king's position at the time that Calvin wrote to him was far different from his earlier stance of tolerating humanists and evangelicals. An example of that earlier attitude was his 1523 order releasing the evangelical humanist Berquin from the jurisdiction of the Parlement.[12] Another example was the instruction he sent from his captivity in Spain in 1525 ordering the Parlement to cease and desist its juridical proceedings against Lefèvre d'Etaples, Gérard Roussel, Pierre Caroli, and other evangelicals, and warning the Court not to attempt any such procedures until he could return to France.[13] Even more striking was the long series of increasingly threatening letters menacing punishment should the Court proceed to execute Berquin who had been found guilty of espousing heretical positions that he had previously renounced.[14]

What was the cause of the king's change from tolerating to persecuting those he had earlier protected? Politics certainly played a role. The Concordat of Bologna that Francis had made with the pope in 1516 had given him extensive authority over the church in France; but it became apparent that the very structure of that church would be abolished by the reformers who were becoming more radical by the year. There were other political motives, but politics alone cannot be blamed. From his youth Francis was imbued with a strong streak of religion – some might call it religiosity or even superstition. An early manifestation of this occurred in 1521 when, just after suffering a serious head wound in a joust, he swore by Christ's crown of thorns that if he survived he would donate a golden reliquary to the Sainte-Chapelle.[15] Another sign of his religious streak was his scrupulous observance of the tradition of attending the solemn exposition of the relics of Saint Denis prior to leaving France to wage war.[16]

Historians have generally maintained that the king's change from toleration to persecution was caused by the Affair of the Placards in October 1534, when posters blaspheming the Catholic Mass were put up in Paris and in several

11 I take this summary from Battles' introduction in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics 20 (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1960), 3–31.

12 But the king's *Conseil* did elicit an abjuration by Berquin of his alleged heresies – an act that would later lead to the charge of recidivism – a capital offense.

13 Farge, *RRR*, 227–9; cf.; 271–2.

14 Farge, *RRR*, 259, 269, 280–1, 289–90, 282–6.

15 Farge, *RRR*, 27.

16 Farge, *RRR*, 310–12, 483, 654–6.

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provincial cities.[17] My study of the Parlement documents, however, convinces me that the change in Francis began nine years earlier.[18] In October 1525, while still in captivity in Spain after losing the Battle of Pavia, Francis lay gravely ill in a comatose state for twenty-four days. His condition was so serious that his entourage expected his imminent death. The archbishop of Tournon came to Madrid to offer Mass at his bedside with a large gathering of courtiers in attendance. At the point in the Mass where the celebrant elevated the consecrated host, the king suddenly moved and raised his hands. After the Mass, when his astonished sister Marguerite had a piece of the consecrated host brought to him for adoration, he exclaimed, "This is my God who will heal me, body and soul; please, let me receive him." One of the many witnesses to this startling scene was the president of the Parlement of Paris who reported it in great detail to the Court in Paris.[19] Francis himself later declared that God had raised him from death to life.[20]

From that time on the king was particularly intolerant of any denial of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. As an example, just after returning to Paris from Spain, he learned that Jacques Pauvant, a citizen of Meaux who had been sentenced to life in prison for heresy, had denied that very doctrine of the real presence. The king told the Parlement that he would rather die than allow such an error to persist in France. He ordered a second trial that sentenced Pauvant to death.[21] Two years later, in 1528, Francis took the lead in organizing a solemn procession of penitential expiation for the mutilation of a statue of the Blessed Virgin holding the child Jesus. In tears, as bystanders would testify,

17 For example, Hans Hillerbrand writes that "The Affair of the Placards … brought an end to the king's policy of benign neglect of reform and reformers and the beginning of a ruthless suppression of religious dissent." See his *The Division of Christendom: Christianity in the Sixteenth Century* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2007), 322. A similar impression is given, though with more cautious wording, by Philip Benedict and Virginia Reinburg, "Religion and the Sacred," in *Renaissance and Reformation France: 1500–1648*, ed. Mack P. Holt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 138–39.

18 For a more detailed presentation of this than is possible here see James K. Farge, "François I[er]: De la tolérance à la répression," in *François I[er] imaginé: Actes du colloque de Paris organisé par l'association Renaissance-Humanisme-Réforme et par la Société Française d'Etude du Seizième Siècle, Paris, 9–11 avril 2015*, ed., Bruno Petey-Girard et al. (Geneva: Droz, 2017), 289–301.

19 Farge, *RRR*, 223–4.

20 Farge, *RRR*, 1284.

21 Farge, *RRR*, 263–4, 272–3. The archives of the papal judges-delegate are not extant, but the fact is recorded in the Parlement's documents: Farge, *RRR*, 272–3.

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he set in place a silver replica of the statue that he had commissioned.[22] Much more significant, however, in that same year he created a special tribunal to re-examine the charges of heresy brought against Louis de Berquin – the same evangelical humanist whom he had twice saved from prison and then saved from execution. That tribunal found Berquin guilty of recidivism and sentenced him to exile. When Berquin – mistakenly counting on his usual royal protection – appealed the verdict, the court condemned him to death, and the sentence was carried out that same day.[23]

A few months later, in December 1529, Francis made a move that more than any other would strongly impact the Reformation in France. He named as the chief President of the Parlement of Paris Pierre Lizet – the same Lizet who considered all humanists and evangelicals to be heretics.[24] He was the very one who had sponsored earlier court actions against Lefèvre, Gérard Roussel, Erasmus, Berquin, and dozens of others. In other words, Francis raised to this key position of judicial power the man who would be scrupulously vigilant in directing the Court to prosecute and punish any signs of reformist doctrine and practice; and that is what Lizet did for the next thirty-two years. At that same time in 1529, Francis appointed two councilors of the Parlement as special inquisitors of the Faith and ordered all judges and royal officers throughout France to aid them in ferreting out and bringing to justice all heretics in France.[25] In February 1530, Francis personally ordered the Parlement to investigate a letter containing heretical doctrines that was found in a student's room in a Paris college.[26] That letter implicated four students who would later become leading members of the Reformation in Switzerland: Antoine Saunier, François Martoret, Jacques Le Coq, and Pierre Viret. As no follow-up to this matter has been found in the Court's documents, one can surmise that all four wisely abandoned their studies in Paris and returned home to Switzerland.

22 See the letter of the king to the Parlement about this matter, a long justification on the importance of sacred images by the king's counsel, Pierre Lizet, and a description of the procession in Farge, *RRR*, 324–42.

23 Farge, *RRR*, pp. 346–52. In 1526, however, Francis had protected Berquin against the Parlement's intention to put him to death (ibid., 253, 259–63, 265–6, 269–70, 280–1, 282–6, 289–92).

24 The actual documentation for this nomination is not extant, neither in the registers of the Parlement nor in the *Catalogue des actes de François I^er^*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1887–1908).

25 Farge, *RRR*, 398–9.

26 Farge, *RRR*, 361–2.

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Then, on November 1, 1533, the newly-elected rector of the University of Paris Nicolas Cop, a friend of Calvin, gave an inaugural lecture that his audience considered heretical. The king ordered Cop's arrest, but he and Calvin fled the city. Francis wrote to the Parlement on this occasion: "We are extremely disturbed and appalled that in our great city of Paris, the chief city and capital of our kingdom where is found the most important university in Christendom, this damnable Lutheran heretical sect is being spread."[27] He appointed an additional four councilors as special inquisitors, and demanded to know who had forewarned Cop, allowing him to escape.[28]

In the summer of 1534, the king sent a commission composed of seven members of the Parlement to Alençon, the capital city of his sister Marguerite's hereditary domain, with instructions to arrest and bring to trial all alleged heretics in that county.[29] Although the second half of the documentation on those proceedings has been lost, the part that is extant reveals that at least eleven of those who were convicted of heresy were sentenced to death by that royal commission.[30] Despite these many repressive decisions and actions by the king, Francis continued to protect two of his sister's evangelical protegés: Lefèvre d'Etaples and Gérard Roussel. Additionally, he ordered all copies of the book that Noël Béda had written against Lefèvre and Erasmus to be confiscated and withdrawn from sale.[31] But then came the night in October 1534 when the infamous Placards were posted in Paris and in several provincial cities. They represented for King Francis the gravest of crimes: blaspheming the Eucharist. Retribution was swift. Nine implicated persons were put to death. Just weeks later, after learning that the text of the posters was circulating as a pamphlet,

27 Cop's lecture spurred condemnatory letters not only from the king but also from Chancellor Antoine Duprat and the Grand Master of France Anne de Montmorency urging the Parlement to greater diligence in stamping out heresy; see Farge, *RRR,* 400–3.

28 Farge, *RRR*, 398–402. Calvin's role in the redaction of the lecture remains problematic.

29 On Marguerite as well as the early French evangelicals, see Jonathan Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

30 Farge, *RRR*, Appendix B.

31 Farge, *RRR*, 273–6. Nevertheless, more than a hundred copies had already been sent to a dozen different cities; and the book was immediately reprinted in Cologne. On the polemic between Erasmus and Béda see James K. Farge, "Introduction," in *Declarationes ad censvras Lvtetiae*, ed. Clarence H. Miller, in *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* IX: 7, (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 1–20; and Clarence H. Miller and James K. Farge, "Introduction," *Declarationes ad censuras Lutetiae vulgatas sub nomine facultatis theologiae Parisiensis*, in Collected Works of Erasmus 82 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), ix–xxxiv.

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Francis ordered all printing of any kind to be stopped.[32] In expiation for the blasphemy, he organized and took part in the most elaborate religious procession of his whole reign. After it was over, and after witnessing the execution of eleven more accomplices in the plot, he spoke these extraordinary words: "I intend my kingdom to be completely rid of these errors, with no exceptions. If one of my own arms were infected with them I would cut it off. If my own children were soiled with such errors I would personally consign them to the flames…."[33]

Six weeks later, the king's anger had abated to the point that he rescinded the draconian order to cease all printing; but, still wary of the press, he limited the number of printers to twelve and ordered that only previously approved books should be printed.[34] Remaining vigilant, he sometimes called the Parlement's attention to books that he considered heretical.

Although Calvin had fled Paris with Nicolas Cop in 1533, there was no warrant for his arrest. He moved freely in France during the next year, staying for a time with his friend Louis Du Tillet in central France and then visiting his home town of Noyon in northern France. There, in May 1534, he resigned the benefice that had provided him with an income for thirteen years. He spent some time in Paris, but it is not clear whether he was there when the blasphemous posters were put up. The execution of the twenty implicated persons, however, must have convinced him to move on. Shortly after February 1, 1535, when the king signed an order declaring anyone who even harbored a heretic to be guilty of a serious crime,[35] Calvin and his friend Du Tillet left France for Switzerland, where an encounter with Guillaume Farel would change his intention to lead a quiet, scholarly life to begin a lifetime career of evangelical writing and preaching. That career will be developed more fully in other chapters of this collection.

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32 Although the complete text of that 13 January letter has been lost (or suppressed), a telling segment of it appears verbatim in the king's revised letter of 13 February. It quotes the following draconian sentence from the original letter: "No one, under pain of death by hanging, is hereafter to print or cause to be printed in our kingdom any book." See note 35 below.

33 François Bonnardot et al., eds., *Registres des délibérations du Bureau de la ville de Paris*, vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1883–1903), 198–9.

34 Farge, *RRR*, 425–6. This revised letter, written six weeks after the first, changes that to the milder prohibition that no one is to print anything at all until further notice; but violators would still suffer death by hanging, and Francis still intended to limit the production of books to reprints of old titles that he personally approved. There is no measurable indication, however, that these measures were implemented in Paris, where more than fifty printers exercised one of the most economically important occupations in the city.

35 Farge, *RRR*, 1295–6.

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In July 1535, the king made a surprising move. Anxious to form an alliance with Protestant princes in Germany against Emperor Charles V, he issued the Edict of Coucy that offered to grant pardon to French citizens who had been convicted of heresy, on condition that they renounce their heresy.[36] Only six weeks after that Edict was announced, Calvin addressed his *Institutes* to Francis I. Perhaps he saw a real chance to rally the king to the evangelical cause; but, as previously mentioned, there is no record of Francis reading or reacting to Calvin's "Address" to him.

For the legal angle of our overview of the situation in France, let us now look more closely at France's Supreme Court of justice, the Parlement of Paris. From about 1535, the Court's *Chambre criminelle* took on increasingly significant jurisdiction over persons accused of heresy. My edition of about 1200 documents from the Parlement's registers contains summaries of about 900 court trials for heresy.[37] They are termed "summaries" because the detailed records of the trials – the nature of the heresy, the arguments of the prosecutors and attorneys, the testimony of witnesses, and so forth – were kept separately in burlap bags that were all destroyed in a great fire in 1776 – a tremendous loss to historians of the Reformation. The general summaries that remain are often formulaic, stating, for example, that the accused had proffered "scandalous and erroneous propositions against the honor of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints of Paradise, the faith of holy mother Church, and the constitutions and traditions of the Christian religion." But they do reveal the names and towns of residence – and sometimes the occupations – of the hundreds of persons accused of heresy.

In about 200 of those 900 cases the prisoners received the relatively mild punishment called an *amende honorable*. The prisoner, clothed only in a long shirt, standing bareheaded and barefoot, holding a burning candle and facing the cathedral or principal church of the town, publicly abjured his or her errors and asked pardon of God, the king, and the Court. For many others the sentence was even less stringent: they were to attend Mass dressed as a public penitent or hear a sermon on the doctrine they had denied or the devotional practice that they had criticized. For those whose crimes were deemed more serious the punishment might include a public flogging as they were paraded through the town, a number of hours locked in the pillory where they were exposed to public abuse, or exile for a specified number of years or for life.

36 Farge, *RRR*, 1298–1300.

37 For a study of heresy trials by all fifteen of the French Parlements, see William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

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Prisoners were always interrogated; but some were "put to the question" – a euphemism for questioning under torture. One phrase employed – *la question actuelle* – meant that the prisoner would be tortured in the hope of learning the names of associates or accomplices. The sentence of death was usually reserved for three categories of convicted prisoners: first, recidivists (that is, those who returned to heresy after having previously abjured it); second, those who denied or blasphemed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist; and third, those who had committed serious acts of sacrilege. About 190 of those who were convicted were sentenced to death, although the documents leave it unclear as to whether 38 of those 190 were actually executed. Twenty-one others had their sentence commuted either to exile or to serve in the king's galleys, with the threat of hanging should they attempt to escape. One was pardoned, three had the charges dropped, and two escaped prior to execution.

The usual method of execution was burning at the stake, and this was habitually carried out the same day that the sentence was read. In almost all cases, the Court ordered that the condemned should be made "to feel the flames for a little while" but would then be strangled and their body burned. Any who blasphemed as they were being transported to the place of execution would have their tongue excised to prevent them giving scandal to the public who had gathered to witness the execution.

We today naturally recoil in the face of such brutal practices. Some historians feel constrained to decry them each time they confront them; but most understand and work under the historical reality that in the sixteenth century it was perceived that the common good prevailed over that of an individual, especially when the common good was seen as protecting the eternal salvation of those who might be tainted if a heretic were allowed to live among them.

A final topic of pertinence is the censorship of books, since it concerns all three elements of French life – intellectual, political, and legal – that concern us here, and especially because Calvin's Geneva and other Protestant cities like Basel and Strasbourg were actively printing books that were censured as dangerous or heretical in Paris.[38] When Luther produced his well-known three radical books in 1520, both the Faculty of Theology and the Parlement were quick to respond. In 1521 the Faculty condemned him as a heretic, and the Parlement issued three decrees forbidding the printing or selling of any book concerning

38 More broadly on this topic see Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Geneva: Droz, 1997); Andrew Pettegree. *The French Book and the European Book World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Ingeborg Jostock, "La censure au quotidien: le contrôle de l'imprimerie à Gèneve," in *The Sixteenth-Century French Religious Book*, ed. Andrew Pettegree, Paul Nelles, and Philip Conner (London: Routledge, 2017), 210–238.

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religion without the prior approval of the Faculty of Theology.[39] This effort created "the Conservative Party" in France – a regime of censorship and repression that was grounded in mutual confidence between the Parlement and the Faculty. None of the Parlement's members dissented from adopting the Faculty of Theology's momentous judgment forbidding publication of new versions of the Bible, whether in Latin or in vernacular translations – a real victory for the scholastic theologians. From that time on the Parlement and the Faculty carried out joint inspections of Paris bookshops, although the Faculty narrowly avoided trouble with the king when a devotional poem composed and published anonymously by the king's sister Marguerite of Navarre fell under the censor's condemnation. Some evangelical reformers expressed hope that this would at last put an end to Faculty influence.[40] Yet the reformers' optimism was premature, and the on-site inspections of bookstores resumed. Antoine Augereau, the book's printer, was himself executed for heresy in the aftermath of the Affair of the Placards.

As previously stated, the king himself had taken draconian steps in 1535 to prevent printing of heretical books. He continued to be concerned. For example, he ordered the Parlement to investigate the anonymously authored dialogue, *Cymbalum mundi*, in which he said there were great errors.[41] Following investigation, its printer Jean Morin was imprisoned and the bookseller Jean de La Garde was executed at the stake. This and other royal initiatives paved the way for later rulings of the Parlement against heretical books. The most famous of those rulings, issued on 1 July 1542, directly involved Calvin. The Parlement arrested a Flemish bookseller who had brought copies of the French translation of Calvin's *Institutes* to sell in Paris.[42] In a lengthy ruling the Parlement threatened to punish anyone who printed, sold, read, or even possessed it or any other censured book.[43] The decree also outlawed all commerce in books by anonymous authors or those printed under a spurious

39 James K. Farge, *Le parti conservateur au XVI^e siècle: Université et Parlement de Paris à l'époque de la Renaissance et de la Réforme*, Documents et inédits du Collège de France (Paris: 1992), 47–52. See also idem, "The Origins and Development of Censorship in France," in *The Renaissance in the Streets, Schools, and Studies: Essays in Honour of Paul F. Grendler*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Nicholas Terpstra, (Toronto: Centre For Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 233–55.

40 See V.-L. Bourilly and N. Weiss, "Jean Du Bellay, les protestants et la Sorbonne (1529–1533)," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du Protestantisme français* 52 (1903): 208–9.

41 Farge, *RRR*, 464–5.

42 Farge, *RRR*, 556–7.

43 Farge, *RRR*, 557–63. Calvin's name appears for the third and last time as author of the copy found in the possession of the humanist editor and printer Etienne Dolet, who was eventually executed in 1546 (Farge, *RRR*, 688, 719).

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printer's name. Following up on this ruling, the judges required booksellers to submit an inventory of all the books received from abroad.

For over two decades, censorship had always been by an ad hoc judgment against a specific book or author. In 1543, however, the Faculty of Theology drew up and circulated freely a manuscript list of 65 condemned books. As requests for the list multiplied, however, the theologians saw the need for a printed edition in multiple copies and set about adding a large number of titles to it. This *editio princeps* of all printed catalogues of prohibited books produced by the Paris Faculty of Theology in 1544 contained the titles of 230 books. The slightly expanded 1545 catalogue carried royal and juridical edicts threatening reprisals against anyone printing or selling any of the listed books. These same sanctions were printed in all the later, expanded editions of 1547, 1548, 1549, 1551 and 1556.[44] The 1556 catalogue raised the total number of forbidden books to 526. Although it was the last Index issued in Paris, the Paris theologians continued to censor books. They even scrutinized the first papal Index of Forbidden Books (1559) before allowing it to circulate in France. As late as 1561, the Faculty intended to bring out a new, expanded catalogue. But that was the year in which the religious and political violence began which was to last until the end of the century.

Three points shall be made in conclusion: First, the king and his Parlement inevitably referred to heretics in France as "Lutherans" or, a few times only, as "sacramentarians." As far as can be determined, neither the king nor the Court ever referred to anyone as a "Calvinist" or a follower of Calvin.

Second, the arrest and prosecution of heretics gathered momentum in the last three years of the reign of King Francis I. This was facilitated by the king's ordering the Paris theologians to make a list of the essential doctrines of the Catholic Church. The Faculty drew up the "Twenty-six Articles of Faith" in 1543. The Articles were particularly concerned with reaffirming doctrines that were being contested by evangelical preachers, but they also served the censors of books. Those Articles of Faith became enshrined in French law for several decades.[45]

Third, after King Francis I died in 1547 his successor Henry II allowed the Parlement to accelerate the execution of heretics in what historians call the *Chambre ardente*, or "burning court." It was reined in after a few years but, amidst the "Wars of Religion" that persisted for decades, the intellectual,

44 See J.M. De Bujanda, Francis M. Higman, and James K. Farge, eds., *Index de l'Université de Paris: 1544, 1545, 1547, 1549, 1551, 1556* (Sherbrooke, Québec and Geneva, 1985).

45 Farge, *RRR*, 664–5. For the text of the articles in French see ibid., 625–8; for the Latin version, see ibid., 661–4.

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political, and legal milieu in France that had driven John Calvin from France continued after his death in 1564 at least to the end of the century.

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CHAPTER 4

Sixteenth-Century French Legal Education and Calvin's Legal Education

Christoph Strohm

In late 1527, when Calvin was in the final stages of his preparatory philosophy studies at the Collège Montaigu, his professional ambitions shifted. Up to that point, he was supposed to study theology, following his father's wishes and likely also those of the cathedral chapter of Noyon. Apparently this plan also suited the young man's own inclination and talents.[1] However, in early 1528 or possibly already at the end of 1527, he transferred to the law faculty at the University of Orléans.[2] His father had changed his mind and expected more profitable career opportunities would arise from the study of law. Thirty years later, Calvin reported: "When I was yet a very little boy, my father had destined me for the study of theology. But afterwards, when he considered that the legal profession commonly raised those who followed it to wealth, this prospect induced him suddenly to change his purpose. Thus it came to pass, that I was withdrawn from the study of philosophy, and was put to the study of law."[3] Presumably recent conflicts between the cathedral chapter and Calvin's father played a role in the latter's decision. That said, Calvin's early biographers interpret his reorientation away from the study of theology as an indication that he was already beginning to distance himself from Roman "superstition" as a result of his contact with his cousin Pierre Robert Olivétan (ca. 1500–1538).[4]

1 See CO 21: col. 54.

2 See Pierre Mesnard, "Jean Calvin, étudiant en Droit à Orléans," in *Actes du Congrès sur l'ancienne Université d'Orléans: Recueil des conférences prononcées les 6 et 7 mai 1961 à l'occasion des journées d'étude consacrées à l'ancienne université d'Orléans* (Orléans: Comité d'organisation des journées universitaires d'Orléans, 1962), 83–91; Olivier Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole: Étude de rhétorique réformée* (Paris: Editions Champion, 1992), 37–55.

3 CO 31: col. 21. Translation from John Calvin, *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 26.

4 Cf. CO 21: col. 29, 54, 121.

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1 Orléans and Bourges as Centers of Humanist Legal Scholarship

As a student in Orléans and (since the summer of 1529) intermittently in Bourges, Calvin entered a world given to reflection on the future foundations of Europe on a level rivaled only by a few other places.[5] Both universities could attribute their recent rise to prominence to the fact that the Sorbonne theologians jealously guarded over the authority of traditional scholasticism. Jurists on the law faculty were equally anxious to preserve the dominance of canon law in the curriculum. In 1219/20 Pope Honorius III (1150–1227) issued an edict establishing that only doctors of canon law could teach on the law faculty of the Sorbonne. In contrast, the universities of Orléans and especially Bourges were conceived from the start as alternative educational institutions specializing in Roman law.

Next to canon law, the foundation of the study of law in Bourges rested on the four components of the civil law code compiled under the Emperor Justinian I in the sixth century: the *Codex Iustinianus*, the *Digest,* the *Institutes*, and the *Novels* (the latter were known in the sixteenth century as "Authenticum"). Over the course of five years, students heard lectures in rotation on the *Codex*, the *Digestum vetus* (Dig. 1–Dig. 24:2), the *Infortiatum* (Dig. 24:3–Dig. 38), the *Digestum novum* (Dig. 39–Dig. 50) as well as the *Institutes.* These were supplemented by courses on the *Novels* and a few other texts.[6]

In the years 1528 to 1531, just when Calvin was studying law in Orléans and Bourges, the law curriculum underwent fundamental changes.[7] Of particular importance was the law school in Bourges, which over the next few decades became the European center of the new humanistic approach to legal studies.[8]

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5 See Christoph Strohm, *Ethik im frühen Calvinismus: Humanistische Einflüsse, philosophische, juristische und theologische Argumentationen sowie mentalitätsgeschichtliche Aspekte am Beispiel des Calvin-Schülers Lambertus Danaeus* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1996), 223–28.

6 On the instruction program in Orléans, see Marcel Fournier, *Histoire de la science du droit en France, III: Les universités françaises et l'enseignement du droit en France au moyen-âge* (Paris 1892), 98–106. For an overview of the course of study of a sixteenth-century law student, see Karl Heinz Burmeister, *Das Studium der Rechte im Zeitalter des Humanismus im deutschen Rechtsbereich* (Wiesbaden: Guido Pressler, 1974), 73–137.

7 On the expansion of humanism in Orléans in the first half of the sixteenth century, see Jacques Boussard, "L'Université d'Orléans et l'humanisme au début du XVI^{e} siècle," *BHR* 5 (1938): 209–30.

8 On the founding of the University of Bourges, which was established in 1463, see Marcel Fournier, "La fondation et la première réforme de l'Université de Bourges, avant son apogée au XVI^{e} siècle (1463–1530)," *RHDF* 23 (1899): 540–87 and 697–757; *RHDF* 24 (1900): 217–48 and 657–76; on the teaching of law in Bourges, see Edmond Durtelle de Saint Sauveur, "Eguiner Baron et l'école de Bourges avant Cujas," *Travaux juridiques et économiques de l'université de Rennes* 15 (1936): 69–114; on the professors of law in Bourges, see Émile Chénon,

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Beginning in 1529, the Italian Andrea Alciato (1492–1550) was teaching for a short time in Bourges; he was one of the leaders of the movement endeavoring to orient the study of law toward the aims of humanism.[9] Orléans tended the legacy of Guillaume Budé (1467–1540), who had studied law at the university there and had subsequently provided the decisive impetus to the development of humanistic jurisprudence in the first two decades of the sixteenth century with his path-breaking investigations into the formation and development of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*.[10]

In the first half of the sixteenth century jurists in France engaged in wide-ranging debates over method.[11] The new approach developed in France came to be known as the *mos gallicus*, whereas the traditional method was designated the *mos italicus.* The latter reflected the traditional interpretive and lecturing method employed by scholastic jurists, who sought to explicate the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* through the application of a relatively rigid scheme.[12] Medieval legal commentaries organized the statutes of the law topically, paying no attention to historical context and the development of Roman law. In contrast, the humanistically inclined jurists sought to understand Roman law in the

"Les professeurs de droit français de l'Université de Bourges et les manuscrits de leurs cours," *RHDF* 45 (1921): 584–633; Christoph Strohm, *Calvinismus und Recht: Weltanschaulich-konfessionelle Aspekte im Werk reformierter Juristen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr & Siebeck, 2008), 25–38.

9 On Alciato, see Virginia W. Callahan, "Andrea Alciati," in vol. 1 of *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Peter G. Bietenholz and Thomas B. Deutscher (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 23–26.

10 The most important works are Guillaume Budé, *Annotationes in XXIV. libros Pandectarum*, sine loco, sine anno [Paris 1508]; Guillaume Budé, *De asse et partibus eius libri quinque*, sine loco, sine anno [Paris 1515].

11 On these debates, see Guido Kisch, *Studien zur humanistischen Jurisprudenz* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1972), 17–61; Domenico Maffei, *Gli inizi dell'umanesimo giuridico*, 2nd ed. (1956; Milan: Giuffré, 1968); Vincenzo Piano Mortari, "Considerazioni subli scritti programmatici dei giuristi del secolo XVI," *Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris* 21 (1955): 276–302; Burmeister, *Studium*, 241–61; Philippe Desan, *Naissance de la méthode: Machiavel, La Ramée, Bodin, Montaigne, Descartes* (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1987), 97–100; Jean-Louis Thireau, "L'enseignement du droit et ses méthodes au XVI^{e} siècle: Continuité ou rupture?" *Annales d'histoire des facultés de droit et de la science juridique* 2 (1985): 27–36.

12 See Burmeister, *Studium*, 241–51; Marguerite Boulet-Sautel, "Sur la méthode de la Glose," *Annales d'histoire des facultés de droit et de la science juridique* 2 (1985): 21–26; on the interpretive and lecturing methods of scholasticism, see Norbert Horn, "Die legistische Literatur der Kommentatoren und die Ausbreitung des gelehrten Rechts," in *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur der neueren europäischen Privatrechtsgeschichte*, vol. 1, *Mittelalter (1100–1500): Die gelehrten Rechte und die Gesetzgebung*, ed. Helmut Coing (München: C.H. Beck, 1973), 324.

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context of classical antiquity.[13] They drew broadly on classical Roman literature (especially Cicero) to illuminate the historical contexts and conditions in which the texts were first formulated. In this process they discovered that the material from the classical period of Roman history (ca. 100 BCE–100 CE) contained in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* appeared in incomplete and partially distorted form. Attention shifted to focus on the *Digest*, since this part of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* contained the teachings and decisions of Roman jurists of the classical period. Budé's critical philological analysis of the *Digest* from the perspective of classical-Ciceronian Latin found many devotees and disciples.[14]

The endeavor to explicate the Justinian legal corpus and especially pre-Justinian law with the assistance of philological and historical aids was, however, but one of the emphases of humanistic jurists' work. A second task involved grasping the ethical dimension of Roman law.[15] Philosophy was seen as the source of law, and jurisprudence itself as a branch of moral philosophy.[16] Discussion of questions of law and morality, the essence of justice, and the nature of laws are characteristic marks of humanistic legal theory.[17] Correspondingly, ethics held a prominent position in the recommendations for reforming the study of law.[18]

The effort to situate jurisprudence in the context of moral philosophy or ethics rested substantially on pedagogical reasons. The third task of humanistic jurisprudence – namely, to delineate the foundational concepts and ideas of

13 See Donald R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970).

14 On Budé's significance for historical-critical interpretation of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, see Louis Delaruelle, *Guillaume Budé (1468–1540) et les origines de l'humanisme français* (Paris: H. Champion, 1923; repr., Geneva: Slatkine, 1970); Donald R. Kelley, "Guillaume Budé and the First Historical School of Law," *AHR* 72 (1967): 807–34; Vincenzo Piano Mortari, "'Studia humanitatis' e 'Scientia iuris' in Guglielmo Budeo," *Studia Gratiana* 14 (1967) [= *Collectanea St. Kuttner*, 4]: 437–58.

15 Kisch, *Studien*, 34, 52–54; Burmeister, *Studium*, 192s.

16 For example, see the statement by Bonifacius Amerbach, "Die Rechtswissenschaft ist ein Zweig der Moralphilosophie," cited in Kisch, *Studien*, 141.

17 See Hans Erich Troje, "Die Literatur des gemeinen Rechts unter dem Einfluß des Humanismus," in *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur der neueren europäischen Privatrechtsgeschichte*, vol. 2, *Neuere Zeit (1500–1800): Das Zeitalter des gemeinen Rechts*, part 1, *Wissenschaft*, ed. Helmut Coing (München: C.H. Beck, 1977), 616–18; see 619–25, for additional literature.

18 Thus for example in the relevant recommendations by the Calvinist legal scholar François Hotman (Werner Vogel, *Franz Hotmann und die Privatrechtswissenschaft seiner Zeit* [Münster: M. Cramer, 1960], 111); on the revisions to the subject matter and curriculum see also Helmut Coing, "Die juristische Fakultät und ihr Lehrprogramm," in *Handbuch der Quellen*, ed. Coing, 3–102, see especially 30–33.

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Roman law – was also pedagogically motivated. The goal of the new method of instruction (the *mos gallicus*) was to spare the students from the overly precise distinctions and long-winded comments of the scholastic approach and offer a comprehensive overview instead of detailed explication of individual texts.[19] Students were to be guided in grasping the foundational concepts and ideas of Roman law. Whereas the medieval approach to interpretation and instruction strictly followed the inherited organization of the authoritative Roman texts, the "French method" probed the appropriate systematic placement of a legal provision and the overall systematic ordering of Roman law.[20] To be sure, there is a certain thematic organization in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, but the fact that the material was divided into the *Codex Iustinianus*, the *Digest*, and the *Institutes* inhibited a completely systematic presentation. The unified, traditional compilation of the Roman sources no longer determined the course of instruction, which would follow instead a systematic, topical arrangement. Inquiry into the fundamental principles underlying a provision and the question of equity (*aequitas*) became key issues.[21]

2 Calvin's Law Professors in Orléans and Bourges

What can be said about Calvin's teachers in Orléans and Bourges and their scholarly profiles? Guillaume Budé had not been teaching at Orléans for some time when Calvin began his studies there, but his body of writings continued to mediate his influence and presence. In Bourges, Calvin heard briefly the lectures of the famous Italian jurist, Alciato. However, his most important teacher was Pierre de L'Étoile (latinized Petrus Stella) (ca. 1480–1537),

19 Burmeister, *Studium*, 301–2.

20 In his pivotal *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship*, Donald R. Kelley provides a rich account of the most important representatives and aims of the historical-antiquarian branch of the French school of humanistic jurisprudence, but at the same time he underestimates the significance of the systematizing school of thought. On this latter orientation, see Coing, *Fakultät*, 33–37; for a basic overview of the humanistic efforts to develop a systematic presentation of the legal material independent from the Justinian structuring principles, see Troje, "Die Literatur," 741–54.

21 Guido Kisch, *Erasmus und die Jurisprudenz seiner Zeit: Studien zum humanistischen Rechtsdenken* (Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1960); Günther H. Haas, *The Concept of Equity in Calvin's Ethics* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997); Christoph Strohm, "Die Voraussetzungen reformatorischer Naturrechtslehre in der humanistischen Jurisprudenz," in *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Kanonistische Abteilung* 86 (2000): 398–413.

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the principal professor of the law faculty at Orléans.[22] Influenced by Budé, he taught in Orléans from 1512 until 1531, when he was named a member of the Parlement in Paris. Stella was the author of a few works on the interpretation of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. He was known beyond Orléans also through his promotion of the writings of his teacher, Budé, who, in his *Annotationes in XXIV libros Pandectarum* – a commentary on the first twenty-four books of the *Digest* – had worked out and sought to explain the differences in regard to the law of obligations.[23] When another humanistically inclined jurist from Freiburg, Ulrich Zasius (1461–1535/36), criticized Budé's work, Stella defended his teacher in print.[24] Stella was then attacked by Alciato's student Aurelius Albucius.[25] This work provoked a response from Stella's student and Calvin's friend, Nicolas Duchemin, in the form of a tract defending Stella. Calvin saw this publication through the press in Paris and contributed a preface dedicated to his friend François Connan (1508–1551), in which he defended the necessity of defending Stella against the critique of his work.[26]

This wide-ranging literary feud can hardly be reduced to a simple conflict between the partisans of the old scholastic orientation and the newer humanistic jurisprudence represented by Zasius and, above all, Alciato.[27] Rather,

22 On Stella see Pataud, "Étoile (Pierre Taisan de l')," in vol. 13 of *Biographie universelle* (*Michaud*) *ancienne et moderne* (Paris 1855), 155; Jean-Eugène Bimbenet, *Histoire de l'université de lois d'Orléans* (Paris/Orléans: Dumoulin, 1853), 354–57; Steven Rowan, "Petrus Stella," in vol. 3 of *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Peter G. Bietenholz and Thomas B. Deutscher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 284; Gisbert Beyerhaus, *Studien zur Staatsanschauung Calvins mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Souveränitätsbegriffs* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1910), 27–31; Godehard Fleischer, "Ulrich Zasius und Petrus Stella: Ein europäischer Streit über eine bereicherungsrechtliche Frage" (J.D. Diss., Albrecht-Ludwigs Universität Freiburg i. B. 1966), 21–37.

23 Budé, *Annotationes* (see note 10 above).

24 Petrus Stella, *Brevis quidem sed elegans ac ingeniosa Repetitio legis* (Orléans: Jacques Hoys, 1519); 2nd ed., expanded (Paris: C. Wechel, 1528).

25 Aurelio Albuzio, *Andreae Alciati Iurisconsulti, in Stellam & Longovallium LL. Doctores defensio* (Basel: H. Froben, 1529). On the circumstances and substance of the debate, see Fleischer, "Zasius und Stella," 40ff., and the literature cited there; on Zasius's biography and writings see Steven Rowan, *Ulrich Zasius: A Jurist in the German Renaissance, 1461–1535* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1987).

26 Nicolas Duchemin, *Antapologia adversus Aurelii Albucii defensionem pro Andrea Alciato contra Petrum Stellam nuper aeditam* (Paris, Gérard Morrhy, 1531). Calvin's dedicatory epistle to Connan appears in CO 9: col. 785–86.

27 This picture of the conflict appears in Michael Leonard Monheit's important study "Passion and Order in the Formation of Calvin's Sense of Religious Authority," 2 vols. (PhD Diss. Princeton University, 1988), 23, 210, 335–36, 390, 446, 495–96; see also Michael L. Monheit, "Guillaume Budé, Andrea Alciato, Pierre de l'Estoile: Renaissance Interpreters of Roman

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underlying the debate were two factors. First, the Frenchman Stella, the German Zasius, and the Italian Alciato were locked in competition over bragging rights for the achievements of humanistic jurisprudence. Second, there was the rivalry – not to be underestimated – between the universities of Orléans and Bourges.[28] To be sure, there are indications that Stella's approach had affinities with the scholastic interpretation of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*.[29] However, there can be no doubt concerning his foundational connection to humanistic jurisprudence.[30] Indeed, Calvin's theology and exegesis of scripture can hardly be said to be shaped by *scholastic* approaches to the law. Monheit's inference that Stella represents the scholastic approach is further excluded by the fact that Calvin's dedicatory preface to Duchemin's treatise defending Stella was addressed to their common friend, Connan, who was also a student of Stella and later became one of the most prominent representatives of humanistic jurisprudence in France.[31] Moreover, in his preface Calvin speaks not only of Stella with deep respect but also pays homage to Alciato. Finally, in opposing the author of the treatise against Stella, Duchemin also criticizes Albucius for clinging too much to the authority of the medieval glossator Accursius and for not clearly enough distancing himself from the methods of the glossators.[32]

Even though the *mos italicus* continued to dominate the instruction in Orléans,[33] Calvin acquired his juristic competence in the milieu of a humanistically-oriented jurisprudence. To be sure, the old scholastic arrangement of the material determined both the interpretation and doctrine, but within this the humanistic legacy of Budé was also effective in the attention paid both to the contradictions in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* and also to resolving them through appeal to the complex formation history of Roman law. The commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia* that Calvin wrote immediately after

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Law," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997): 21–40; critical evaluation of Monheit's thesis in Strohm, *Ethik*, 224–27.

28 Fleischer, "Zasius und Stella," 42–47; Boussard, "L'Université d'Orléans," 223, 226.

29 Monheit, "Passion and Order," 159–62, 173–80, and 192–98.

30 Budé's influence on the humanistic orientation has been detailed by Boussard, "L'Université d'Orléans," 222–23 and 225–26. Stella praises Budé's wisdom and alleges that Alciato followed Budé without openly acknowledging it (cf. ibid., 227 n. 4); further references to Stella's appeal to Budé in Fleischer, "Zasius und Stella," 89, 102; see also Rowan, "Petrus Stella," 284.

31 On Connan, see Christoph Bergfeld, *Franciscus Connanus (1508–1551): Ein Systematiker des römischen Rechts* (Köln/Graz: Böhlau, 1968).

32 Boussard, "L'Université d'Orléans," 228.

33 See Burmeisters's judgment: "Orléans war zwar antischolastisch, hielt aber am mos italicus fest und blieb insbesondere unter Petrus Stella ein Zentrum der Bartolisten" (*Studium*, 69).

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concluding his studies in Orléans provides clear evidence of his connection to the humanist movement.[34]

Calvin's training in the interpretation of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* remains operative on many levels in his extensive work on biblical texts.[35] His work more broadly gives no indication that he consciously rejected the subject matter and methods he had learned in the course of his legal studies. To the contrary, he repeatedly praises the field of law, and in his own *Institutes* he names jurisprudence ahead of philosophy and other disciplines as proof that even after the Fall human nature is capable of true understanding of earthly things.[36]

3 Effects of Legal Education on Calvin's Theology

Traces of all three of the aims of humanistic jurisprudence outlined above can be found in Calvin's later activities as theologian: his lifelong pursuit of a philological-contextual explanation of biblical texts; the weight he assigned to questions of ethics and church order; and finally, his interest in a systematic presentation of Christian doctrine, which took shape in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Beyond these common goals, Calvin's entire doctrinal profile was influenced by the formative years he spent in the milieu of humanistic jurisprudence.

First, the concept of accommodation, so central to Calvin's interpretation of the Bible as a result of the gap between finite and fallen human nature and the majesty of God and God's law, corresponds in principle to the doctrine of equity that humanistically-oriented jurists had moved to the center of their

34 See Quirinus Breen, *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931; 2nd ed. 1968), 61; Ford Lewis Battles and André Malan Hugo, "Introduction," *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*, ed. Ford Lewis Battles and André Malan Hugo (Leiden: Brill 1969); on the understanding of law and state in the commentary, see Beyerhaus, *Calvins Staatsanschauung*, 1–25. Herein Calvin cites Budé five times (cf. Beyerhaus, *Calvins Staatsanschauung*, 33–39, esp. 34, 47).

35 See the effort to document this influence in Monheit, "Passion and Order," 340–41, 342–43, 421, 424, 426, 497, 499–500. See also Barbara Pitkin, "Calvin's Mosaic Harmony: Biblical Exegesis and Early Modern Legal History," *SCJ* 41, no. 2 (2010): 441–66.

36 "What then? Shall we deny that the truth shone upon the ancient jurists who established civic order and discipline with such great equity? Shall we say that the philosophers were blind in their fine observation and artful description of nature?" (*Institutes* II.2.15). A positive evaluation of jurisprudence from the later period can be found in a letter from 1559 (CO 17: col. 680–81); at the same time, see also Calvin's critique of lawyers in a letter to Olevian on October 27, 1562 (cf. CO 19: col. 564). For more discussion see Beyerhaus, *Calvins Staatsanschauung*, 39–45, esp. 43.

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interpretation of Roman law. Their approach likewise sought to interpret a specific law in light of particular circumstances and when necessary to soften it, lest a literal rendering of the highest law (*summum ius*) results in injustice through misapplication to an individual case. The application of a single legal statute needed always to be determined in light of the meaning of the whole and in the context of the foundational rulings of the body of Roman law.

Beyond this influence on his exegesis, traces of Calvin's study of the law can be felt throughout his theological work. Calvin's theology of the law is decisively more positive than Luther's. In keeping with the demand to complete Luther's reformation of doctrine with a reformation of morals, for Calvin the third use of the law as a positive guide for the regenerate constitutes the principle use of the law.[37] This central focus comes to expression in Calvin and in later Calvinism in the more consistently biblical articulations of church order and ecclesiastical law as well as in the intensified efforts to shape the world through law and ethics.

To this end Calvin not only authored church orders but was also active in the development of secular law in significant ways. One characteristic example can be seen in his proposal for Genevan marriage legislation, which he drafted at the request of the town council.[38] The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, which governed the ecclesiastical and religious life in Geneva, were also part of the civil and public law. Moreover, the Genevan town council explicitly and repeatedly sought Calvin's advice on legal affairs.[39]

Calvin's study of the law influenced other basic goals of his reforming efforts. For example, whereas for Luther the question of a merciful God was definitive, Calvin's reform aimed at reestablishing legitimate worship of God. Calvin identified this as the decisive reason behind his own rejection of Roman Catholicism and his embracing of evangelical reform.[40] To be sure, humanism and the Pauline-Johannine biblical traditions (with their prioritizing of the spiritual aspect of the divine nature) also contributed to this emphasis

37 *Institutes* II.7.12–17.

38 "Projet d'ordonnances sur les mariages" [1545], CO 10/1: col. 33–44.

39 See, for example, "Quaestiones matrimoniales," CO 10/1: col. 231–44; "Quaestiones iuridicae," CO 10/1: col. 245–54; cf. Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvinus Legislator: The 1543 'Constitution' of the City-State of Geneva," in *Calvinus servus Christi: Die Referate des Internationalen Kongresses für Calvinforschung vom 25. bis 28. August 1986 in Debrecen*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Budapest: Presseabteilung des Ráday-Kollegiums, 1988), 225–32; Jürgen Baur, *Gott, Recht und weltliches Regiment im Werke Calvins* (Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1965), 141–50; on Calvin's participation in Genevan civil law and trial law, see Josef Bohatec, "Calvin und das Zivilprozeßrecht in Genf," in *Calvin und das Recht* (Feudingen: Buchdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt, 1934), 209–79.

40 See Calvin's letter to a Catholic priest from 1542 (CO 11: col. 485–86).

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on proper worship. Nevertheless, one should not overlook the legal context that underlies this orientation as well. Calvin's explanation of the first commandment in the *Institutes* provides a clear statement of this prominence of the issue of proper, spiritual worship: "The Lord wills alone to be pre-eminent among his people, and to exercise complete authority over them. To effect this, he enjoins us to put far from us all impiety and superstition, which either diminish or obscure the glory of his divinity. For the same reason he commands us to worship and adore him with true and zealous godliness."[41]

Hence, for Calvin, justification by faith should be taught not only for the sake of assuring believers of the certainty of their salvation, but also and primarily in order that justice may be done to God's honor, because human salvation depends entirely on God alone. Discussing the limits of fallen human nature, Calvin cautions: "Nothing, however slight, can be credited to man without depriving God of his honor...."[42] He explicitly underscores that the justification of the sinner serves God's honor and the revelation of divine righteousness; therefore, anyone who praises his or her own righteousness robs God of his honor.[43] Calvin intensifies this Augustinian heritage decisively in his doctrines of providence and predestination. Not only election but also reprobation has as its goal the amplification of the glory of God. The reprobate "have been raised up by the just but inscrutable judgment of God to show forth his glory in their condemnation."[44]

Finally, Calvin's formulation of self-denial, which in the *Institutes* provides the basic orientation of his ethics, is unfolded with assistance of juridical terminology and allusions to God's legal rights over the entirety of human life: "Even though the law of the Lord provides the finest and best-disposed method of ordering a man's life, it seemed good to the Heavenly Teacher to shape his people by an even more explicit plan to that rule which he had set forth in the law ... the duty of believers is 'to present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him' [Rom. 12:1], and this consists in the lawful worship of him.... [W]e are consecrated and dedicated to God in order that we may thereafter think, speak, mediate, and do, nothing except to his glory."[45]

As Calvin observes at the beginning of his explication of the Decalogue: "Now what can be learned from the [moral] law can be readily understood: that God, as he is our Creator, has toward us by right the place of Father and

41 *Institutes* II.8.16.

42 *Institutes* II.2.1.

43 *Institutes* III.13.1–2.

44 *Institutes* III.24.14.

45 *Institutes* III.7.1; see also III.7.2.

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Lord; for this reason we owe to him glory, reverence, love, and fear; verily, that we have no right to follow the mind's caprice wherever it impels us, but, dependent upon his will, ought to stand firm in that alone which is pleasing to him."[46] This vision of all human action as systematically oriented toward the glory of God lent a powerful ethical impulse to early Calvinism – as Ernst Troeltsch correctly established a century ago in regard to Calvin.[47] Independent of its influence on "material ethics" (as Troeltsch conceived this), the concentrated focus on this all-encompassing goal vastly intensified expectations for human behavior. Every individual action should be framed in such a way as to serve the greater goal, for the sake of which all creation and human life themselves ultimately exist.[48]

Translated by Barbara Pitkin

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46 *Institutes* II.8.2.

47 Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (1912; repr. Tübingen: Mohr & Siebeck, 1994), 622–24; *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols., trans. Olive Wyon (repr. New York: Harper & Row, 1960) 2: 587–90.

48 See Strohm, *Ethik*, 286–316.

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CHAPTER 5

The Meaux Group and John Calvin

Jonathan A. Reid

1 John Calvin and the Early Reformation in France: the Crux of the Problem

In his biography of Calvin, Bruce Gordon writes, "he was … ruthless, and an outstanding hater. Among those things he hated were the Roman church, Anabaptists and those people who, he believed, only faint-heartedly embraced the Gospel and tainted themselves with idolatry."[1] The faint-hearted, of course, included so-called Nicodemites, Spiritual Libertines, and other 'scandalous' figures whom Calvin attacked in a series of tracts starting in 1537 (See Table 1). As Frans Pieter van Stam, Francis Higman, Bernard Roussel, myself, and others have argued, among Calvin's chief targets were members in the evangelical circles connected to King Francis 1's sister, Marguerite of Navarre.[2] Ranging from original Meaux group members such as Guillaume Farel, Jean Le Comte de La Croix, Gérard Roussel, and Pierre Caroli (See Table 2) to subsequent fellow-travelers like Antoine Froment, Marie Dentière, and Clément Marot (See Table 3), dozens of evangelicals from these circles over time were for Calvin variously models, patrons, colleagues, false friends, and enemies. The fact that Calvin came to 'hate' – if that is the right term – some of those evangelicals whom he had known before he sought exile, necessarily colors every attempt to interpret their relationship. The reasons for Calvin's later antipathy towards that group is also of paramount importance for understanding the development of his reform program and strategy for advancing the renewal of the faith among all those living in Catholic lands who would not or could not fully

1 Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), vi.

2 Frans Pieter van Stam, "The Group of Meaux as First Target of Farel and Calvin's Anti-Nicodemism," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance* 68 (2006): 253–275; Francis M. Higman, *Censorship and the Sorbonne: A Bibliographical Study of Books in French Censured by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris, 1520–1551*, Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance 172 (Geneva: Droz, 1979), 39–45; John Calvin, *Œuvres*, ed. Francis Higman and Bernard Roussel (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2009), xv–xvii, 1273–1287, esp. 1274–1276, 1283–1284; Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols., Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 2: 550–563. Cf. E. (Emile) Doumergue, *Jean Calvin, les hommes et les choses de son temps*, 7 vols. (Lausanne: G. Bridel & cie, 1899–1927), 2: 25–28.

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advocate 'the reformation of the Gospel' because of the threat of persecution.[3] Calvin's clear call to flee the Catholic Church had significant, if delayed, effect. More than a decade later, in response to his imperative, French evangelicals chose to form separate Reformed churches.

The following essay attempts to contribute to our understanding of Calvin's early career and evolving reform agenda by shifting the primary focus from the Genevan reformer to the French evangelicals. Sections one and two summarize schematically the latter's aims and accomplishments, first, during the period when their movement coalesced around the Meaux reform from 1521 to 1525, and second, from that point to Francis I's death (April 1547), which ended their hopes for a royal Gallican reformation. Along the way, these sections relate Calvin's involvement as a minor player in the French evangelical movement. Section three turns to focus on Calvin. It interprets his campaign against Nicodemism as a rejection of the French evangelicals' magisterial reform efforts, which he had seconded from the early 1530s to 1543.

The pole star for this inquiry is the observation made by Pierre Fraenkel, van Stam, Higman and Roussel that a key change in Calvin's ecclesiology precipitated his Anti-Nicodemism. Sometime in 1536 after publishing the *Institutes*, Calvin came to believe that the traditional church, its clergy, and its sacraments were utterly corrupt and an abomination before God. Disagreeing with Bucer, Melanchthon, and other reformers, he asserted that no remnant of the true church remained in the traditional church at all. No true believer, he argued in the 1537 *Epistolae duae*, can participate in its rites, especially the Mass, without sinning grievously or occupy an ecclesiastical position in that church without *ipso facto* leading their flocks to perdition.[4] In effect, he believed that no reform from within the traditional church was possible.

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3 Carlos Eire sees Calvin's utter abhorrence of idolatry and emphasis on purity of worship, both of which prompted his attack on Nicodemites, as core elements of his theology and the ideological motor which would eventually drive the Reformed to schism and revolution, an argument developed at length in *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chs. 6–8.

4 Erik Alexander de Boer and Frans Pieter van Stam provide excellent summaries and theological and historical notes in their edition of Calvin, *Epistolae Duae* (*1537*)*, Deux Discours* (*Oct. 1566*)*, Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia, Scripta Didactica et Polemica*, vol. 4. (Geneva: Librarie Droz, 2009). Their edition supersedes Barth, OS 1, 284–362; and CO 5, cols. 233–312. De Boer and van Stam make a strong case (pp. xi–li, esp. xxvii–li) that Guillaume Farel, particularly during the 1536 Lausanne disputation, heavily influenced Calvin's anti-Nicodemite thought and expression in this work, even if, as previous scholarship has established based on Beza's testimony, he began writing these letters earlier in 1536 when at Renée de France's court in Ferrara. See also the work of the scholars in notes 2 and 35, Gordon, *Calvin*, 77–78; and Bernard Cottret (*Calvin: Biographie* [Paris: J.C. Lattès, 1995]), who provides a good

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Guided by this fundamental insight, sections one and two will draw on some little-known theological tracts and letters of the French evangelicals that speak to their ecclesiology and sacramental theology to show that they were fully aware of their theological and existential dilemma as well as that they had coherent theological and practical answers to their predicament of living under the cross of persecution within the corrupted church and its rites. It demonstrates that Calvin rejected these so-called Nicodemites not simply because, as he saw it, they were consciously and hypocritically temporizing with abomination for self-serving ends based on a corrupt ecclesiology. More importantly, with respect to their divergent reformation strategies, Calvin was in effect, though he never says so explicitly, willfully rejecting Marguerite and her colleagues' hopes of and ongoing efforts to induce Francis I to institute a magisterial reform as princes had done and were doing elsewhere.

Before turning to the Meaux reform, the terms and the scope of this inquiry need explanation. This paper's title is shorthand for a broader and more complex set of relationships. "The Meaux Group" here stands by synecdoche for the circle of French evangelicals, who quickly coalesced around the clerics and scholars leading the reform effort in that diocese and pursued evangelical reform across France long after that reform effort came to an end. Because their principal and most powerful patron was Marguerite of Navarre, I have named that group in my work the "Navarrian network" and will use the term below to designate that more extensive and long-lived group. Similarly, while "John Calvin" in the title points to this essay's focus on the reformer's early career and his relationship with members of those groups, I want to situate him as one among hundreds of men and women formed in the broad French evangelical fold. A few of these early evangelicals, like Farel and later Calvin, came to believe, faced with ongoing persecution, that leading a true Christian life was no longer possible in the kingdom and chose exile to pursue reform abroad, starting a trickle of emigration in the 1520s through 1540s that would only become a steady stream in the 1550s. Thus, while focused on Calvin's relationship with veterans of the Meaux group and their associates, this essay sheds light on the broader course of the evangelical movement in France. Following Calvin scholars such as Bouwsma, Oberman, and Gordon, this paper hopes in particular to shed further light on how the ever-evolving existential dimension of living under the cross in France informed the thought and praxis of dissenters like Calvin and his some-time brethren, whom he eventually rejected.

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overview of the anti-Nicodemite works of Calvin, Farel, and Viret, but omits discussion of Calvin's *Epistolae duae* or the context in which he wrote it.

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2 The Meaux Experiment: More Than a Diocesan Reform, 1521–1525

Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet's reform of the diocese of Meaux drew on three sources.[5] First, he built on the strong tradition of observant monastic and clerical reform movements, which had begun in France in the 1490s. The clerical side of the observant movement had for many years been anchored at the College of Montaigu in Paris, where famously Erasmus, Calvin, and St. Ignatius of Loyola would go on to study.[6] Prior to Meaux, Briçonnet had already reformed the abbey of St-Germain-des-Prés outside Paris. Starting in 1518, he attempted to ameliorate the quality of the clergy in his diocese, but by 1520 his efforts had been immobilized by legal roadblocks thrown up by recalcitrant clerics, especially Franciscan friars. In 1521, Briçonnet turned for help to a second source: his former teacher, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples. He invited Lefèvre and his disciples to fill slots in an innovative system of preaching circuits covering all the diocese's parishes. He had set up this system to bypass the core problem that most parish priests and curates were either absent or incompetent. He allowed Lefèvre and company to innovate in their attempt to evangelize the laity, bringing to bear their considerable skills as humanist educators and scholars.

When he reached Meaux, Lefèvre was already a renowned pioneer in three fields. He and his disciples had revised the University of Paris's arts curriculum, especially the study of Aristotle; they had edited classic works of *pastoralia* to aid the aforementioned programs of clerical reform; finally, he was the first northern European biblical humanist to produce philological commentaries on the Psalms (1509) and Paul's epistles (1512, revised 1515). Prior to Meaux, he and his disciples, known as "Fabrists" after his Latin name, Faber Stapulensis, had also been embroiled since 1514 in a series of controversies over his biblical exegesis and commentaries. By 1520, he was an admirer of Luther and he and

5 This section summarizes findings in Reid, *King's Sister*, 1: chs. 5–7. Only supplemental information and sources are cited below.

6 Calvin left Noyon to study in Paris from 1521 to 1525/6 at the College of Montaigu obtaining his baccalaureate and master's degree in arts. He evidently made periodic returns to Paris during his study of law at Orléans, beginning in 1525/26 (with a return to Paris in winter of 1530–1531) and at Bourges 1529/30. See Calvin, *Œuvres*, "Chronologie," xlv–xlvii. For the late medieval clerical and mendicant reform movements, see Augustin Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d'Italie* (*1494–1517*), 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie d'Argences, 1953; 1st ed. Paris: Édouard Champion, 1916). The Bibliothèque de Ste. Geneviève, which stands on the site of the former college, has a plaque commemorating the fact that Erasmus, who hated his short time at the College of Montaigu, was an alumnus. Calvin's and Ignatius of Loyola's longer tenures there are not commemorated nor those of Jan Standonck, Noël Béda, or any of the leaders who made the college (in)famous.

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his followers were thereafter widely associated by partisans and critics alike with the evangelicals just then emerging in the Empire. And indeed, over their years at Meaux, the Fabrists became avid students of the German evangelicals, thus introducing a third source to the Meaux reform. Following the lead of the Germans, the Fabrists put in place a robust and innovative program of biblical instruction. Inspired by Luther's 1522 German New Testament translation and his sermon collections, Lefèvre produce a French translation of the New Testament in 1523 and the Psalms in 1524 to give the laity, high and low, men and women included, direct access to the scriptures. Briçonnet paid for Lefèvre's Bible translations to be published and distributed to the laity free of charge. Laypeople were instructed to read the lectionary readings each week in preparation to understand better the exegetical homilies delivered by Lefèvre's disciples. Following the example of Œcolampadius in Basel, and with Briçonnet's permission, the Meaux group gave daily bible lessons on the Psalms and Paul's epistles to the Romans to the more advanced, men and women included. In 1525, based on their preaching and Lefèvre's biblical exegesis, they published a model book of sermons in French. Starting in 1524, they also aspired to publish a variety of catechetical tracts – some were of their own devising, others they translated from Latin works of German reformers – but they were stymied because in the wake of the 1521 Luther condemnation the Parlement of Paris had required that all religious books receive approbation by Faculty of Theology before publication.

This coalition of the Paris Faculty of Theology led by Noël Béda and the Parlement of Paris, which James Farge has helpfully identified as the "Conservative Party,"[7] opposed the Fabrists as soon as they took up the reform of Meaux in early 1521 but their attacks were thwarted by the protection Marguerite won for them at court. In October 1525 they finally succeeded in quashing the reform while Francis I was in captivity and his sister Marguerite absent to negotiate his release. Briçonnet was made to answer to the Parlement of Paris, which issued arrest warrants for the reform's principal leaders: Lefèvre, Gérard Roussel, Michel d'Arande, and Pierre Caroli. They fled to safe havens; the first three under pseudonyms to Protestant Strasbourg.

Some of the key features this experiment in episcopal reform a had a bearing upon Calvin's later stance against French evangelicals. First, their project was both vertically and horizontally integrated. At the top of the vertical axis, Bishop Briçonnet acted within his authority as a prelate when implementing this controversial reform program. Moreover, he and Marguerite,

7 James K. Farge, *Le parti conservateur au XVI^e siècle: Université et Parlement de Paris à l'époque de la Renaissance et de la Réforme* (Paris: Documents et inédits du Collège de France, 1992).

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his collaborator and champion at court, sought magisterial support. They attempted to convince Francis and his mother, Louise of Savoy, not just to protect members of the Meaux group, but as early as 1521 to back the Meaux reform as a model of national church renewal. They wanted Francis I to use his right of nomination under the 1516 Concordat of Bologna – an agreement with the pope which Briçonnet had negotiated – to select like-minded prelates, who would institute similar programs of evangelization. At the lower end of the social axis, Lefèvre and his disciples refocused reform efforts from ameliorating the parish clergy – which had been Briçonnet's initial emphasis – to direct evangelization of the laity.

Along this central vertical access, Marguerite and the Meaux group sought to build support for the reform program among all levels of society. She had d'Arande preach and teach at court, winning followers especially among the ladies, including such notables as the Philiberte de Savoie, (her aunt), Renée de France (sister of Queen Claude), and later Anne de Pisseleu (Francis I's mistress).[8]

This horizontal integration of their reform extended into the rest of France. Starting in the early 1520s preachers inspired by the new evangelical doctrines began evangelizing in major cities. Marguerite sent some preachers to the capitals of her ducal territories, Alençon and Bourges, or brought them with her as she traveled with the court, where they preached when opportunity allowed, as Roussel did at Blois in 1527 and at Paris from 1533 to 1534 (See Table 4). Other evangelical clerics preached and taught independently in Amiens, Rouen, Lyon, Grenoble, Mâcon, and Toulouse. As evangelical preachers such as the Paris doctor of theology, Aimé Maigret, came under investigation for heresy, they and the local conventicles they fostered sought and received protection from Marguerite and her allies. Through this process of, what might be called, 'axial centering' towards Marguerite, the polygenetic evangelical movement in France came to have a loose structure as a widespread network.

The second feature of their reform is that in the face of stiff opposition from conservatives, they temporized when persecution became severe. The conservative party, it is important to note, had reliable allies in the defense of orthodoxy at court, such as Chancellor Duprat and the king's confessor, Guillaume Petit, and it was at court where the fate of evangelical reform would be decided. When the winds were against them, French evangelicals bided time, preaching when they could, preserving the elect as best they could.

8 Jonathan A. Reid, "Imagination and Influence: The Creative Powers of Marguerite de Navarre at Work at Court and in the World," in *Women and Power at the French Renaissance Court*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2018), 263–386.

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As the conservative party gained the upper hand in 1523, mounting persecution forced evangelicals into the first stage of the 'Nicodemite' dilemma that would become endemic in the following decades. They faced tough questions: How far should they press to promote the Gospel? How safe was it to do so? How far and long should they temporize with the corrupt church while working towards a fuller reformation of the faith? Should they stay or seek exile abroad? Reoccurring bouts of persecution forced members constantly to reassess their commitments to the cause: a few like Bishop Briçonnet would cave to the pressure, others like Farel fled to lands open to reform, helping to establish a French evangelical diaspora, but the majority remained and pursued their agenda strategically in light of the changing prevailing conditions.

One of the founding members of this diaspora was Guillaume Farel. A disciple of Lefèvre, though not a priest like most of the others, he was active in the early stages of the Meaux reform until his frustration at its slow progress and, most likely, Bishop Briçonnet's bowing to pressure from conservatives in the fall of 1523 induced him to emigrate. His correspondence with members of the Meaux group from 1524 to 1526 documents that all the major questions later at issue in Calvin's anti-Nicodemite polemics about reformation strategy and comportment within the Catholic Church were then being discussed by Farel and the Meaux group. Particularly important are a set of long letters Gérard Roussel and other Meaux group members addressed to Farel from January 1524 to August 1525.[9] The former master and pupil reached different conclusions that would lead to the severing of their active collaboration after 1526. Theologically, except for the issue of the real presence in the Eucharist, they agreed on all the major evangelical doctrines from justification by faith alone and the sole authority of scripture to the need to reestablish, as Roussel put it, "the divine praise and the pure worship of God, which were formerly obscured by the traditions of the southern daemon."[10] On ecclesiology and

9 None of Farel's letters in these exchanges survive. For those of the Meaux group to him, see G. Berthoud and A. Labhardt, "Lettre de Lefèvre d'Étaples à Guillaume Farel du 13 janvier 1524. Présentation et traduction," *Librarium* 26, no. 3 (Zurich, 1983): 213, 216–217, and A.-L. (Aimé Louis) Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, 9 vols. (Geneva, Basel, and Lyon: H. Georg & cie. and Paris: Michel Levy frères / G. Fischbacher, 1866–1897), 1: nos. 83, 98, 102–105, 109, 117, 124, 162, 178, 182, 184, 188, 185.

10 This phrase comes in a lengthy section of the letter in which Roussel agrees with Farel that the laity will play a significant role in restoring religion. Roussel at Meaux to Farel in Basel, 6 July 1524 (Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 1: no. 104, 231–240; 232–233). "Nam dici non potest quam cupiam nostros ab evangelica simplicitate nusquam excidere, ad Christi simplicem regulam suos formare mores, id quod audio apud vos fieri, sed reclamantibus interea hujus mundi sapientibus, denique iis per quos non oportuit negocium Christianum

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reformation goals, they agreed in principle but diverged tactically. Echoing Lefèvre's prefaces to his New Testament translations, Roussel fervently agreed with Farel that God's real agents in renewing religion were not "the princes and the wise of the world," but the people, who were just then being instructed by the Holy Spirit via the scriptures. In a long reflection on the office of the pastorate, he also agreed with Farel that ministers could be elected from the ranks of the people, but laid down a decisive qualification:

> As for the office of pastor, I will not claim for myself either the name or the office, since I consider to be pastors only those whom the Spirit has selected for the ministry of the word.... Nor [however] does it displease me to have a hierarchy in the church (*ordo in ecclesia*), but I will only accept the one that the Spirit indicates and ordains, in whatever form that may be, lest I should cause the eyes of those new-born in the faith to be blinded by its noon-day brightness. I agree that priests (*presbyteros*) may be selected by the people, but I demand first that the people be Christian and act according to God's spirit. And if that is not that case, I do not see how anyone will be able to restore the state of Christianity, since the people are bewildered and are being divided into contrary camps.[11]

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promoveri, ne qui humanis presidiis et non integra rei summa divinae virtuti ascriberetur. Infantes sint et lactentes, vasaque fictilia ac penitus abjecti, oportet, per quos divina laus Deique purus culus, dudum demonii meridiani traditionibus obscuratus, novetur ac proficiatur; id quod tum quoque fuit, cum cepit res agi per Christum et suos apostolos." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own: "For no words can express how much I desire our compatriots never to be deprived of [excidere] evangelical simplicity [and always] to conform their behavior to the simple rule of Christ, which I hear is happening where you are [in Basel, (apud vos)]. But meanwhile, with the wise of this world protesting, indeed those through whom it was not proper that the cause of Christ be promoted lest the whole matter be ascribed to human helpers [presidiis] rather than to divine power, it is fitting that the suckling infants, 'earthen vessels,' and the most humble be the ones through whom divine praise and the pure worship of God, which formerly were obscured by the traditions of the southern daemon [southern=Rome], be renewed and made effective, just as it was when the whole matter began to be set in motion by Christ and his apostles."

11 Roussel in Meaux to Farel in Basel, 6 July 1524 (Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 1: no. 104, 231–240; 236): "Pastoris munus, ut neque nomen, non arrogo mihi, etiamsi in numerato habeam solos haberi [pastores] quos ad ministerium verbi deligit spiritus.... Nec mihi displicet ordo in ecclesia: sed hunc solum amplector quem exhibet ac requirit spiritus, quicunque tandem sit, ne infirmos nactus oculos cogar deinde in luce meridiei cecutire. Presbyteros a populo deligi mihi probatur, sed requiro antea populum fieri christianum et Dei agi spiritu, qui, si desit, non video qui ita succurri possit christianae rei, cum scindatur incertum studia in contraria vulgus."

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Echoing statements by Lefèvre in his New Testament prefaces and Briçonnet in his correspondence with Marguerite, Roussel affirms here that the only true ministers are those who rightly announce the word of God.[12] But to protect the weaker brethren, pending the full spread of the Gospel to all the laity, he asserted that reform needs to be structured and organized by pastors, *faute de mieux*, from within the existing church. Roussel goes on to agree with Farel that ideally it would be good to refute the false doctrines of conservative theologians in public disputations and in published books (as Farel was attempting to do in Basel in 1523/4), but in every letter to Farel he stresses that the Meaux preachers were being threatened with death. Roussel laments that to go beyond preaching the pure word and attack false Catholic doctrines, they would court martyrdom, for which he frankly admitted he lacked the courage.

In sum, while the Meaux reformers sought and received some material support from clerical and magisterial powers, they ultimately saw their movement as one under the banner of Christ and his Gospel, led by the Holy Spirit. They were even prepared, however, to accept that God in his wisdom would allow persecution to succeed and French churches to wallow in error while others abroad advanced in the Gospel.[13]

In preparation for the next sections, it is worth recalling that the young 'Jean Cauvin' was an arts student in Paris during the Meaux reform. He was sixteen in October 1525 when the key members of the group fled to avoid arrest for heresy. Given that Calvin would later recall with pain the execution of his friend, Étienne de La Forge, following the Placards, it is also worth noting that he was either in Paris or Orléans from late 1525 to August 1526 when another member of the Meaux group, Jacques Pauvant, was arrested, tried, convicted, and burned to death as a heretic, one of the first to be executed in France for that crime during the Reformation era. We can surmise that Calvin must have been well-informed, indeed better than most contemporaries, about the whole Meaux affair, which in those years garnered huge attention. News spread, especially in Paris, through sermons, public edicts, printed censures, as well as polemical pamphlets, plays, and street songs. Contemporary journalists noted the wide-spread rumors about the "Lutherans of Meaux." While debates about their doctrines and program raged in the schools. As noted by James Farge, the head of Calvin's college, Noël Béda, had led conservative theologians and jurists in their attack on the Meaux group. We can even surmise that Calvin may have applauded the successful shuttering of the Meaux reform, for he was during his

12 Reid, *King's Sister*, 1: 180–181, 190–205.

13 Roussel to Farel, 24 August 1524 (Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 1: no. 117, 272–273). Reid, *King's Sister*, 1: 310–312.

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early years, as he later admitted in the preface to his 1557 psalms commentary, thoroughly conservative in doctrine and committed to the church.

3 The Navarrian Network and the Quest for a Royal Reformation to 1547

After Francis I returned from captivity in 1526, Marguerite was able to recall the Meaux exiles and obtained positions for them at her court or within Francis's gift, having Lefèvre made tutor to the king's children and d'Arande named bishop of St.-Paul-trois-chateaux. Farel ignored the offer of a post in the independent evangelical territory of Sedan just over the French border, from which, Roussel advertised, he would be able to help to evangelize France. From that point forward to the end of Francis's reign, the course of the evangelical movement was, to borrow Yogi Berra's apt phrase, "*déjà vu* all over again," that is, a series of attempts by evangelicals in Marguerite's network to advance the "cause of Christ," as they called it, principally by promoting evangelical preaching by members of the clergy, only to have those efforts, like the Meaux experiment, beaten back by conservatives.[14]

Marguerite and her network, however, opened several new fronts to their campaign. At the top of the vertical axis, Marguerite ever aspired to induce Francis to lead a royal reformation of the Gallican church. Starting during his captivity in Spain and persisting well into the 1540s she attempted to persuade her brother to become one of the religious personas that she scripted for him in her letters and literary works, as a penitent sinner, a new David or St. Francis, wholly dependent on God for forgiveness who would thereby become the instrument of divine will for the reformation of the church and kingdom. She did not get very far in her efforts to convert her worldly brother.[15]

At the bottom of that axis, while waiting for opportunities to advance the cause more openly, Marguerite and her allies opened a dangerous second front,

14 This section summarizes findings in Reid, *King's Sister*, 2: chs. 8, 9, and 11.

15 Marguerite's attempts to 'convert' the king went unfulfilled even though, or perhaps because, she was seconded by Martin Bucer, Wolfgang Capito, Ulrich Zwingli, François Lambert, and other reformers abroad who dedicated theological treatises to the king or members of the royal family from 1524 to 1530 at the request of members of her network. See R. Gerald Hobbs, "Le félin et le dauphin: Martin Bucer dédie ses commentaires sur le psautier au fils de François Ier," in *Le livre et la Réforme*, ed. Rodolphe Peter and Bernard Roussel (Bordeaux: Société des bibliophiles de Guyenne, 1987), 217–232; Olivier Millet, "Wolfgang Fabricius Capiton à Marguerite de Navarre (1528): Dédicace de *In Hoseam prophetam commentarius*," in idem., 201–216; Bernard Roussel, "La dédicace à François Ier du *De vera et falsa religione commentarius* de H. Zwingli (mars 1525)," in idem., 187–199.

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a semi-clandestine printing initiative designed to bypass censorship and evangelize the laity via print. Their printing campaign lasted a bit over a decade. From 1525 to 1534, the printers Martin Lempereur in Antwerp, Simon Du Bois initially at Paris and then in Alençon, seconded by the young Robert Estienne and Antoine Augereau in Paris and Pierre de Vingle in Lyon, produced scores of religious works, most of them devotional and catechetical in French, most of them anonymous, many of them translations of works by German reformers, Luther in chief. This group of printers were also responsible for printing Lefèvre's complete Bible translation (Lempereur 1530, revised 1534) as well as Marguerite's own first efforts as a religious poet (Du Bois, 1531 & 1533; Augereau, 1533). Persecution and the untimely death of Lempereur largely silenced these French evangelical presses by 1535, and the printing initiative passed, with Vingle, who had migrated to Neuchâtel in 1531, to the evangelicals of the diaspora in the Swiss Romand led by Farel.

Before the Navarrian network's clandestine printing campaign came to a crashing halt, Marguerite and her allies at court opened a potentially much more decisive avenue for advancing the evangelical cause. Seizing on the emergence of solid anti-papal, potentially anti-Hapsburg powers, namely the Schmalkaldic League in 1531 and schismatic Henry VIII in 1533, Marguerite and evangelicals at court attempted to induce Francis to promote reform in the realm by tying that issue to his dynastic interests and foreign policy. They succeeded in inducing the king to pursue alliances with these powers in three periods: from 1533 to 1535, from 1540 to 1543, and again from 1544 into the beginning of the Schmalkaldic War in 1546. Via the diplomatic corps of Jean and Guillaume Du Bellay, the Navarrian network extended their longstanding working ties with evangelicals abroad reaching from Wittenberg and the Saxon court through Hesse, Strasbourg, Bern, to Basel. Its operatives included Johann Sturm and Johannes Sleidan, both of whom were in Paris during the early 1530s at the same time as Calvin. At Strasbourg and beyond, they would later become friends.[16]

The details of these alliance schemes and why each failed need not detain us here. The relevant point for this study is that Marguerite and her evangelical allies waged a tactically astute and far from doctrinaire campaign to advance the evangelical cause on the international stage. And at every juncture, they

16 For the first mention of Sturm in Calvin's correspondence see Bucer's letter to Calvin, [July 1538], in John Calvin, *Epistolae*, ed. Cornelis Augustijn and Frans Pieter van Stam, Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia, Series VI, Epistolae, vol. 1. (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2005), no. 78, 417–421. The editors note that in 1533 Sturm and Calvin were in close proximity in Paris and may have known each other since they travelled in similar circles and reported in their letters on similar events, idem., pp. 77 and 132.

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were opposed by conservatives at court, whose power, if anything, grew stronger by the end of Francis's reign.[17]

As part of this political dimension, Marguerite's allies also sought to elevate evangelicals to positions of influence in French church and state. Dozens of network members received ecclesiastical appointments. Among those who figure directly in Calvin's career were: Jean Du Bellay, who was named bishop of Paris in 1532, his brother René, bishop of Le Mans from 1535; Odet de Châtillon, the young noble cardinal who would eventually back the Reformed cause in the 1560s; and Gérard Roussel, who was named bishop of Oloron in 1536.[18] In addition, Marguerite employed or protected evangelical clerics and professors, including the likes of Pierre Caroli at Alençon, Melchior Wolmar at Bourges, and Claude Baduel at Nîmes to mention only a three with whom Calvin had extensive dealings (see Tables 2 and 3).

The network's reform campaign was, in sum, multidimensional and centered on effecting a magisterial reformation. Their efforts involved soliciting and accepting clerical positions from the crown and Rome, all the while treating politically with Rome's enemies to advance the Gospel. It was a complicated and potentially compromising program.

Little known or studied texts from the core of the Navarrian network reveal that they had a coherent reforming approach to their dilemma of being persecuted by conservatives and constrained to work within the hierarchies of power that were. In the 1525 *Brief recueil de la substance de la doctrine evangelique*, which was an augmented translation of a summary of Luther's doctrines and reform program penned by Philipp Melanchthon in 1524, the anonymous

17 See Reid, *King's Sister*, 2: chs. 9 and 11; Cédric Michon, ed., *Les conseillers de François Ier* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011); Robert J. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: The Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Karl Josef Seidel, *Frankreich und die deutschen Protestanten: die Bemühungen um ein religiöse Konkordie und die französische Bündnispolitik in den Jahren 1534/35*, Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 102 (Munster: Aschendorff, 1970); Günter Ernst Bers, *Die Allianz Frankreich – Kleve während des Geldrischen Krieges* (*Jühlichische Fehde*)*, 1539–1543: Urkunden und Korrespondenzen* (Cologne: J. Gouder, 1969); David L. Potter, "Foreign Policy in the Age of the Reformation: French Involvement in the Schmalkaldic War, 1544–1547," *The Historical Journal* 20 (1977): 525–544.

18 Twenty-two of some fifty-three prelates Marguerite is known to have worked with or championed were evangelically inclined, including the four mentioned here. See Reid, *King's Sister*, passim. No full study yet exists of the French clergy's response to the Reformation. For the period after the reign of Francis I, see Frederic J. Baumgartner, *Change and Continuity in the French Episcopate: The Bishops and the Wars of Religion, 1547–1610* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986).

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pastor-translator[19] announces in his prefatory epistle to the Meaux group's faithful flock that faced with being silenced because of persecution, evangelical ministers would not abandon them. In lieu of preaching, the pastors would continue to provide them with spiritual nourishment by publishing many books. The preface was the official announcement of the evangelicals' intent to circumvent the censorship of religious books in order to continue to nourish their newly forming faith of lay people. Amplifying Melanchthon's original message, the translator added passages blasting the pope for instituting "the doctrines of devils" that overturn the Gospel, princes and magistrates for executing heretics at the bidding of the clergy, as well as false preachers for having led people astray under the pretext of teaching the Gospel. Adapting Melanchthon's plea for magistrates to change their hearts and to promote true preachers of the Gospel to the situation in France, the translator extemporizes "above all … the princes and senates must chastise the officers of bishops, who … under the pretext of heresy, rob and defame good, peaceful, non-seditious people, and restrain the priests who prevent the laity from reading scripture together as if that were the mother of all heresy."[20]

Several other evangelical texts issuing from Marguerite's network address the dilemma of living 'under the cross,' that is within a corrupt church in need of reformation. An augmented translation of a catechism by the Lutheran Johannes Brenz penned for her circa 1530 stresses that the true church is made up of the elect, the living saints, and that their number is few. A confessional manual included in the presentation manuscript of those texts made for Marguerite proposes a "Nicodemite" approach to one of the basic existential dilemmas facing evangelicals living within Catholic lands: the requirement of being shriven by a priest. This text, which seems to have been written by a

19 The preface is dated 25 September 1525, the same day as a letter by Roussel to Farel, in which he expresses many of the same themes that appear in the *Brief recueil*'s preface and augmented text. See Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 1: no. 162, 389–392.

20 *Brief recueil de la substance et principal fondement de la doctrine evangelique* (Paris, Simon Du Bois, 1525) summarizing B7r forward, with quotation from C3r–v, which is an interpolation into Melanchthon's original text: "Sur toute chose aussy les princes et les senatz doibvent reprimer les officiers des evesques, lesquelz ou par avarice insatiable, ou comme ceulx lesquelz sont les plus grandz hayneurs de l'evangile soubz tiltre de heresie vexent, pillent et diffament les bons chrestiens paisibles et non seditieux. Sentir contre leurs traditions c'est heresie. Blasmer leurs avaricieuses inventions c'est pire que heresie. Lire ou conferer ensemble l'escripture divine cela selon eulx est la mere de toute heresie et pour tant le fault il bien empescher. Mais blasphemer le nom de dieu, jurongner, hazeter, paillarder, ce n'est que rusterie moyennant principalement qu'ilz en ayent une piece d'or par an. Car vela ce que font ceulx qui sont juges ecclesiastiques et spirituelz. Il est de necessite mettre remede à tout cela."

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French evangelical for brethren living in France specifically to accompany Brenz's catechism, teaches that true confession should, indeed must, be made solely to God from whom the sinner alone receives absolution. It allows that the confessant can observe the normal rite in order to save scandalizing lesser brethren (including the priest), but never should the confessant believe absolution comes through the priest or that penance imposed by him is anything more than salutary and optional.[21] In these texts and Gérard Roussel's *Familière exposition*, a catechetical text he completed in the 1540s, the French evangelicals' definitions of the church is consistent: it is the body of Christ, comprised of the elect, whose number is small, often persecuted. In harmony with the Augsburg Confession and Calvin's position, these texts affirm the preaching of the word and the administration of Baptism and the Eucharist as marks of the true church. They even outline new liturgies for the revision of the sacraments, including the Eucharist along evangelical lines.[22]

So where did Calvin fit into this multifaceted movement before and after leaving for exile? For his French period, as scholars well know, we have few sources that bear on the question beyond the eighteen surviving letters from his pre-exile correspondence, the text of his friend Nicolas Cop's All Saint's Day oration, and his and his biographers' piece-meal retrospective remembrances in later works. The details, such as they are known, of his educational cursus, circles of friends, and sojourns from 1528 to 1536 before being stopped in his tracks at Geneva by Farel need not be rehearsed here.[23] Two features of these years nevertheless clearly stand out. First, whatever his capacity for hate, Calvin had a great gift for friendship, and more, he had, as described by Max Weber, a sort of authoritative charisma. The testimony of his biographers, including

21 For a discussion of evangelicals' definitions of the church and discussion of confession in these texts, see Jonathan A. Reid, "Marguerite de Navarre and Evangelical Reform," in *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. Mary McKinley and Gary Ferguson, Brill's Companions to The Christian Tradition 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 52–58.

22 For Roussel's exposition of the two sacraments, see BnF ms fr. 419, *Familiere exposition du simbole, de la loy, et Oraison dominicale, en forme de colloque*, 145v–179v; edited in Paul J. Landa, "The Reformed Theology of Gerard Roussel, Bishop of Oloron (1536–1555), based upon a Critical Edition of his *Familiere exposition du Simbole, de la loy et Oraison dominicale en forme de colloque* and his *Forme de visite de diocese* (c. 1548)," (Ph.D. Diss., Vanderbilt University, 1976), 548–599; and discussion in Reid, *King's Sister*, 2: 525–545.

23 For these years, Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, vols. 1 and 2, provides the fullest account; Alexandre Ganozcy (*Le jeune Calvin: Genèse et évolution de sa vocation réformatrice*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz 40 [Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1966]), T.H.L. Parker (*John Calvin: A Biography* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007]), and Bruce Gordon (*Calvin*) supplement and correct the details in their biographies.

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hostile ones like Florimond de Raemond, as well as of contemporaries, such as Charles de Sainte-Marthe, who wrote a fan letter to Calvin from Poitiers in April 1537, make highly plausible the various accounts that Calvin's friends in and around Bourges, Poitiers, Angoulême, and Noyon and other stops along the way before his exile and ministry abroad asked him repeatedly to give evangelical lessons.[24] Sooner or later, often following Calvin's admonitions and encouragement, significant numbers of those followers would join him in exile.

Second, by 1533 Calvin seems to have been drawn through that process of axial centering from the periphery of the French evangelical movement during his university studies at Orléans and Bourges to much closer contact with its center: Marguerite's immediate entourage and her allies at court. His two letters written to François Daniel from Paris on 24 and 27 October 1533, clearly testify that he was intimate with that inner circle and a follower of Gérard Roussel, whom contemporaries called "Geraldini."[25] These included those evangelicals who had followed his Lenten sermons of that year and then participated in the two-year period of escalating strife between evangelicals and conservatives in the capital, which began with Roussel's sermons and culminated in the posting of the 17 October 1534 Placards against the mass, which occasioned a massive crackdown on all dissenters. In October 1533, Calvin was close enough to the center of this group to give a detailed report about an abusive play staged against Marguerite of Navarre and her almoner Roussel, as well as to have access to manuscript texts circulating among this group, including unspecified works by Roussel.[26] What these texts may have contained is matter of conjecture: perhaps summaries of Roussel's sermons or other manuscript texts he is known to have composed, such as his, now lost, commentary on Romans, which he had wanted Farel to publish in 1524.[27] In any case, these texts were compromising and Calvin warned Daniel not to allow them to fall into hostile

24 For some examples, Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, vol. 1, book 4, appendices 9 and 11; vol. 2, book 1. For Sainte-Marthe's corroborating fan letter to Calvin, see Calvin, *Epistolae*, no. 36, 190–194.

25 Jean Dupèbe, "Un document sur les persécutions de l'hiver 1533–1534 à Paris," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance* 48 (1986): 405–417; Reid, *King's Sister*, 2: 417–435, 554–555; and Gabrielle Berthoud, "Les 'Ajournés' du 25 janvier 1535," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance* 25 (1963): 307–324.

26 Calvin, *Epistolae*, nos. 12 and 13, 75–83.

27 [Jacques Pauvant] to Guillaume Farel, 5 October 1524: "Ceterum, mi Farelle, M. Gerardus te diligenter salutant (sic); rogat ut illi proxime scribas an posset typographis qui apud vos degent mittere commentaria quedam in epist. ad Ro. excudenda. Nam et ipse in legando hanc Paul epistolam assiduus est, qui profecto hac in re quam fidelis sit Christi minister facile dignoscitur." Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 1: no. 124, 291–294.

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hands.[28] In addition, Calvin and Roussel must have come to know each other personally about this time, for in his one surviving letter to Marguerite of April 1545, he called on Roussel as a character witness to corroborate that he had never, while in France, as accused, "retracted anything" or "renounce[d] Jesus for the saving of life or of property."[29]

Calvin's 1545 letter lends credence to Theodore Beza's account in his life of Calvin, which is not attested elsewhere in Calvin's own writings, that after Nicolas Cop came under investigation for heresy for his All Saint's Day oration, Calvin benefited from an audience with Marguerite and received her protection.[30] The likelihood that Calvin co-authored Nicolas Cop's 1533 All Saints Day oration also strongly indicates Calvin was an emerging second-tier organizer in the high-stakes combat between conservatives and evangelicals during that 1533–1534 season of hostilities. Moreover, in 1533–1534 Calvin may even have been aware of the first phases of the court evangelicals' attempt to seek a concord alliance with the German evangelicals and England.[31] Before and even after the post-placards persecution in 1535, which sullied the Germans' views of Francis I, the Du Bellay brothers and their allies had held up Marguerite's long evangelical poem *Le miroir de l'ame pecherresse* (1531), Gerald Roussel's Lenten sermons in 1533 and 1534, and Nicolas Cop's 1533 Rector's oration as evidence that such an outcome might be possible if the

28 Calvin, *Epistolae*, no. 13, 83.

29 Calvin to Marguerite, 23 April 1545; CO 12, no. 634, cols. 64–68; Calvin, *Tracts and Letters*, ed. Jules Bonnet and trans. Henry Beveridge, 7 vols. (repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 4: no. 130, 453–458; 456–457: "As to the reproach of inconstancy which you make against me, I have retracted anything, I assure you, Madame, that you have been misinformed … What is more, I have ever contemplated with horror such faint-heartedness as to renounce Jesus for the saving of life or of property. I have said the same from the time when I was in France, of which there are many witnesses. But in order that you may be more confidently certain, that those who have made such a report of me have abused your too unsuspecting confidence, I refer to Monsieur de Clerac." Gérard Roussel was in 1545 bishop of Oloron and abbot of Clairac. By refusing to refer to Roussel by his episcopal title, Calvin would seem to be denying its legitimacy.

30 Beza, *Vita calvini* (1575), CO 21, col. 123; the information does not appear in the 1564 and 1565 successive versions of the "Vie de Calvin" by Beza and Nicolas Colladon. Beza and Colladon's obfuscation of the roles Marguerite and Roussel played in Calvin's early life (in this episode and others mentioned below) in their 1564/1565 iterations of their *Vie de Calvin* and subsequent prominent appearance of these evangelicals in Beza's 1575 expanded version has not been explained.

31 Reid, *King's Sister*, 2: 436–446. In January 1545, Calvin held up the overtures for a religious colloquy of 1533–1535 as a caution to Melanchthon not to believe similar overtures at that time, CO 12, no. 606, col. 12: "Meministi iisdem te artibus tentatum Suisse a Langeo [Guillaume Du Bellay]. Verum si in Dominum respexerimus, frustra nos adorientur omnibus machinis."

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German evangelicals would lend a hand. If not then, Calvin would certainly have become fully aware of such plans after he escaped to Strasbourg and Basel. Subsequently, from late 1539 into the early 1540s Calvin became a sometime helpmate in the French crown's attempts to scuttle Charles V's overtures for concord with the Protestants from 1540 to 1541 and the Navarrian network's second international evangelical alliance scheme from 1540 to 1542. To that episode of his engagement with the Navarrian network we now turn.

4 Calvin against the "Nicodemites" and Their Gallican Reform: The Avowals and Silences of Calvin and His Biographers

In his anti-Nicodemite treatises, Calvin addressed the core existential question facing any dissenter or would-be reformer whose movement was threatened by persecution and apathy. As that other great reformer in Swiss exile, Vladimir Lenin, once posed the problem "What is to be done?" Calvin's evolving answer to evangelicals living in France was, first, to clerics: renounce your orders, as he had done, or testify more boldly; and to everyone, abstain from Catholic rites and flee if you can or must.[32] Calvin addressed the question on a personal level, but what did he think of the attempt by Marguerite and her court allies to advance evangelicals to positions of power in church and state and, ultimately, to convince the king to permit reform leveraged through international alliances?

32 In the 1544 *Excuse*, addressing evangelicals "qui estans aussi en pais papistes, avec crainte et humilité recongnoissent le povre estat où il sont … [qui] sont en merveilleuse perplexité," Calvin stipulates that they abstain from Catholic rites, pray for forgiveness for their sins, which have called God's wrath down on them, and trust he will send some unspecified remedy. He cites David's faithful suffering of being "banished from the kingdom," but does not positively recommend flight: "Parquoy tous ceux qui sont en pais où il n'y a point forme d'Eglise, ordonnée come il appartient pour adorer Dieu et l'invoquer, ouyr sa parole, et user de ses Sacremens, devroient bien deja avec Daniel souspirer de ce qu'ilz n'ont pas, et ne peuvent avoir, les chose tant necesaires à tous fidels." See Calvin's *Excuse* in John Calvin, *Three French Treatises*, ed. Francis M. Higman (London: Athlone Press, 1970), p. 149, l.26–p. 153, l.2; esp. p. 151, ll.1–15. Nor does he mention flight as an option in his 1537 *Epistolae duae*. Calvin only fully develops that option in his 1552 *Quatre sermons*, which Claude Baduel, who had fled France in 1550, translated into Latin for the 1552 edition of Calvin's *Opuscula omnia* (Peter Rodolphe and Jean François Gilmont, eds., *Bibliotheca calviniana: Les œuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVI^e siècle. I. Écrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques, 1532–1554*, Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance 255 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1991), 456–462; 460–461. For the options Calvin gave evangelicals under the cross, see Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 259–270, who does not note the progression of Calvin's though over those fifteen years in articulating the options.

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In his life of Calvin, Beza admitted that a royal reformation was conceivable. When presenting Calvin's reasons for publishing his *Institutes* and prefatory epistle to Francis I, he writes:

> [Calvin] was compelled to publish his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a rude sketch of that most celebrated work. The German princes, who had espoused the cause of the Gospel, and whose friendship Francis was then courting, feeling offended with him at his persecutions of the Protestants, the excuse offered, on the suggestion of William Bellay of Lange, was, that he had not punished any but Anabaptists, who substituted their own spirit for the divine Word, and held all civil magistrates in contempt. Calvin not submitting to have such a stigma fixed on the true religion, seized the opportunity to publish what must be regarded as an incomparable work, accompanying it with an excellent prefatory address to the King himself. Had the monarch read it, I am much mistaken if a severe wound would not even then have been inflicted on the Babylonish harlot. For that prince, unlike those who succeeded him, was very capable of forming an opinion, and had given proof of no small discernment; was a patron of learned men, and not personally disaffected.[33]

As I have argued elsewhere, the end of Francis I's the reign did mark the demise of French evangelicals' hope for a magisterial reformation, however unlikely the chances of it succeeding may have been. But to that point Marguerite and her allies continued to strive for it, representing to foreign allies that such an outcome was possible because of Francis's character and open-mindedness.

With respect to Calvin's anti-Nicodemite stance the first conundrum, then, is that the likelihood of or possibility of a magisterial, Gallican reformation had not substantially changed from the Placards Affair and its aftermath (Oct. 1534 through the summer of 1535) to 1547. When Calvin and his biographers claim in their retrospective accounts that the post-Placard persecution forced his flight (December 1534) as well as precipitated his decision to publish the 1536 *Institutes* with his accompanying prefatory manifesto to Francis I, there is no reason to doubt they are pointing to a key existential turning point in his career. From scant sources, however, it is difficult to determine for the period 1533–1536 how and when his theological principles and reform aspirations changed in light of his experiences such as: participating in the evangelical initiatives of Roussel and Cop in Paris in 1533; coming to fear persecution starting in late 1533; seeing his friends flee France, like Cop in late 1533, dissimulate

33 Beza, *Vita calvini*, CO 21, cols. 124–125; Calvin, *Tracts and Letters*, 1: xxvii–xxviii.

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their views, or suffer execution, such as Étienne de La Forge in February 1535; and becoming aware of the court evangelicals' tactical political machinations. His disengagement from the Catholic Church and arguably the evangelical movement in France had clearly already begun with his renunciation of his benefices in Noyon in May 1534, but his reforming intent was still nebulous when he landed in Geneva in August 1536 after having spent 1535 at Basel, to which he planned to return after a tour to the court of Renée de France and then Paris and Noyon a final time over the spring and summer of that year.

The more important issue for our purposes is why, late in 1536, Calvin changed course and took the offensive against French evangelicals. The subtext or logical consequence of Calvin's anti-Nicodemite tracts is that he disagreed with them whether reform was possible from within the traditional church, in France or anywhere. By the end of 1536, Calvin's views had evolved to the point that he viewed the old church as an anti-church because of the clergy's apostolic claims to authority and its vitiated sacraments. As noted in the introduction, van Stam, Higman, Roussel, and others have helpfully pointed out this was a radical stance that went beyond the positions of Capito, Bucer, and Melanchthon, who believed at least to that point in 1537 that a remnant church nevertheless remained in the traditional one despite clerical corruption and its false doctrines.[34] Though he never said it publicly, Calvin was, in effect, rejecting Marguerite and her allies hopes for and efforts to pursue of royal reformation as well as their temporizing strategies with respect to participation in church life, particularly the sacraments. Moreover, if not by name, he began openly to criticize them. According to Beza in the additions to his 1575 life of Calvin, he wrote the second of his 1537 *Epistolae duae* upon hearing that his former friend Gérard Roussel had been named bishop of Oloron, accusing him and all other evangelical bishops, abbots, and priests remaining within the Catholic Church of failing to advance the kingdom of Christ and 'butchering souls'.[35]

34 On Bucer's differing view, see Matheson, "Martin Bucer and the Old Church," in *Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Society*, ed. D.F. Wright (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5–16.

35 Important studies of Calvin's and his colleagues' Anti-Nicodemism and tracts include: Albert Autin, *Un épisode de la vie de Calvin: La crise du Nicodémisme* (*1535–1545*) (Toulon: Paul Tissot, 1917); Eugénie Droz, *Chemins de l'hérésie: Textes et documents,* 4 vols. (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 1: 131–171; Eire, *War against the Idols*, chs. 6–7; Olivier Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole: Étude de rhétorique réformée* (Geneva: Éditions Slatkine, 1992), ch. 20; Cottret, *Calvin*, 271–286; Francis M. Higman, "The Question of Nicodemism," in *Calvinus ecclesiae genevensis custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984), 165–170 and idem, "I Came Not to Send Peace, but a Sword," in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as Protector of the Purer Religion*,

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Calvin's remarkably severe and principled stance, however, does not explain, why he relented for six years in his anti-Nicodemite campaign after this initial salvo in 1537 – which was the first of his many polemical works against 'enemies of the faith' of all stripes – before publishing his next major installment in the 1543 *Petit traicté monstrant que doit faire un fidele entre les papistes*. Two possible reasons present themselves. During the first three years of this hiatus Calvin was at Strasbourg (1538–1541), where he came under the moderating influence of Bucer. During the final three years of this gap, he was busy establishing the reformation in Geneva after his return in September 1541. The former reason seems likely. Following Capito's warning against publishing the *Psychopanychia*, the two Strasbourg reformers had been wary in late 1536 of Calvin publishing the *Epistolae duae* and expressed dismay privately once it appeared in print.[36] Moreover, as Fraenkel has established, Bucer countered Calvin's anti-Nicodemite arguments of the *Epistolae duae*, in his unpublished circa 1540 *Concilium privatim conscriptim*.[37] The latter reason – Calvin's pastoral preoccupation with instituting reform in Geneva – is not tenable because upon his return he immediately started publishing a series of polemical tracts against all enemies of the true faith, of which his anti-Nicodemite tracts would form a part, but he only resumed the onslaught against Nicodemism in late 1543.[38] Indeed, he held off publishing such works: he penned the second of the two letters appearing in the 1543 *Petit traicté* originally in 1540. The principle

ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser and Brian G. Armstrong, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies 37 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1997), 123–137; Natalie Szczech, *Calvin en polémique: Une maïeutique du verbe* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017), ch. 20.

36 See Augustijn and Van Stam's introduction to their edition of the *Epistolae duae*, li–lviii.

37 Martin Bucer, *Consilium theologicum privatim conscriptum*, ed. Pierre Fraenkel, Martini Buceri opera omnia, vol. 4 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), lvi–lvii and 131–166 with extensive comparison in his notes with Calvin's *Epistolae duae*. Another good case that Calvin took a harder line than Bucer, Bullinger, Capito and Melanchthon on evangelicals remaining within the Catholic Church and participating in its Eucharist is made in Benoît Girardin, *Analyse d'un discours théologique: Le commentaire de Calvin à l'Epître aux Romains* (*Strasbourg, 1540*), Théologie historique 554 (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 123–129. Bucer allowed the latter under certain conditions. Girardin cites passages from Calvin's 1539 Commentary on Romans that anticipate passages in his 1543 *Petit traité*.

38 See Higman, "I Came Not to Send Peace, but a Sword," for discussion of Calvin's polemical works. His appendix contains lists of them categorized by type. In 1541, Calvin launched into polemics against Catholics, Anabaptists, and radicals who maintained the sleep of the soul after death, but his second round of anti-Nicodemite texts only date to late 1543 and after. See also the list in Peter Rodolphe and Jean François Gilmont, eds., *Bibliotheca Calviniana: Les œuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVI^e siècle. II, Ecrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques, 1555–1564*, Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance 281 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1994), 1132–1136.

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reason for Calvin's restraint, I would like to suggest, is that until 1543 he had not in fact completely given up hope on the evangelicals' attempt to forge a political path towards reformation in France, or at least, that he temporized for a time in expressing his views in order to let that attempt run its course.

The hiatus in Calvin's publication against Nicodemites coincides with Marguerite and her allies' most ambitious attempt to persuade, so they claimed in secret diplomatic exchanges, Francis I to break with Rome by inducing him to form an alliance with England, major German Protestant powers, and the Duke de Cleves. The core of the scheme was a marriage between Marguerite's daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, with the Duke of Cleves, who was in a dispute with Charles V over his inheritance of the duchy of Gelderland, and was seeking the aid of the Protestant princes and Francis I. As early as 1539, when Calvin was under the tutelage of Capito and Bucer at Strasbourg, Marguerite and her allies at court laid the plans that led to the alliance. In 1540 marriage negotiations were underway and by June 1541 Jeanne and the duke were married, but the alliance fell apart in September 1543 when the Elector and Francis I both failed to come to the duke's aid in time and he was defeated by the emperor.[39] I have assessed this ambitious and complex alliance scheme elsewhere.[40] The important point is that along the way Calvin was apprised of the affair through his contacts with Bucer, Johannes Sleidan, and other friends and operatives of Guillaume and Jean Du Bellay who helped to plan and execute the operation. During that same period Marguerite corresponded extensively with most of the principal actors of the German side. Though reticent, Calvin played an ancillary role in the French court's attempt to work with the German Protestants. Meanwhile he kept tabs on events in France and abroad as well as on Marguerite and her entourage. On 16 April 1540, having heard good reports about the evangelization of Bishops Georges de Selve and his former preceptor, Gérard Roussel, who had only taken possession of his diocese in 1539, Farel appealed to Calvin to write them letters of encouragement, but Calvin declined for reasons he said he was only willing to convey to Farel orally.[41] Yet in September 1540 Calvin

39 Calvin did not in fact publish the *Petit traicté* until sometime after 8 September 1543, that is after the Cleves marriage alliance fell apart. See Peter and Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana* (*1532–1554*), 43/6, 132–134.

40 Reid, *King's Sister*, 2: 497–504.

41 "Rufus, praeceptor meus, fertur intentus esse Verbo adnunciando, eleemosynis, ac educandis aliquot in literis. Faxit Christus ut sancté pergat!"; "Vauriensis [Georges de Selve] mire commendatur ob interpretationem Pauli jugem ac juges conciones." Herminjard ed., *Correspondance*, 6: no. 860, 205–221, 209. For Calvin's response 13 May 1540: "Gallis illis episcopis cur scribendum non putem, coram tibi indicabo." See idem, no. 863, 215–225; 223.

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did write from Strasbourg a now lost letter to Marguerite encouraging her to remain steadfast, but declined to do anything publicly, so he told Farel, while affairs remained in doubt.[42] He wrote to her again circa April 1541 with news of about the negotiations at Regensburg between Protestant and Catholics representatives to find a religious concord.[43] Marguerite reciprocated with a letter in July 1541 to announce the marriage of her daughter and asked Calvin to spread word among his friends of her and her husband's delight with the alliance as well as to thank him for helping to scuttle the emperor's attempts to draw off the Protestants in the meetings at Hagenau, Worms, and Regensburg.[44] Calvin responded with another lost letter to her in December 1541.[45] But by late August 1542, even though the Cleves-Navarre marriage had been knotted

42 Mentioned in Calvin's letter to Guillaume Farel, Strasbourg, (toward the end of September 1540), Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 6: no. 893, 315: "Nuper hic fuit Vasco quidam, magnus vir, ut apparebat (quinque enim equos ducebat), per quem Reginae scripsi, vehementerque obtestatus sum ne in tanta afflictione cessaret. Publice nihil possumus, rebus adeo dubiis."

"There was a certain personage here lately, a native of Gascony, one of the magnates as appeared; he had an escort of five horsemen along with him; by whom I have written to the Queen of Navarre and have earnestly besought her that she would not desert us in a time of so great affliction. Publicly we can do nothing, matters continue in such a doubtful state." Calvin, *Tracts and Letters*, 4: 183.

43 In Marguerite's letter to Calvin of July 1542, (see note 44) she alludes to having received a letter from him. According to Herminjard (ed., *Correspondance*, 7: 199, n. 4) Sleidan carried the letter from Regensburg when he left in April. In Calvin's letter from Strasbourg to Viret and Farel in Geneva, 25 July 1541 (the same day that Marguerite wrote to Calvin from France), (Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 7: no. 1015, 196, n. 12), Calvin had not yet heard anything from France; Francis I had not responded to the Protestants' letter of 23 May.

44 Marguerite relates to Calvin that she has received his letter through Sleidan, whom she did not have much trouble defending before Francis given the strong testimony about his service, which Francis trusted more that the false reports that had come in. Francis I is very grateful for the services that Calvin and the others have rendered to him over there, about which he is well informed. She announces the marriage of her daughter to the Duke of Cleves asking him to believe and make known that the King of Navarre and she are very pleased with having a son of their heart and spirit, through whom they hope to do things to the honor and glory of God. She promises to do anything within her power to help him "and the others," and begs him to continue to serve the king. CO 11, no. 226, col. 62; "Lettre de Marguerite de Navarre à Calvin (1540)," *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire du Protestantisme français* 17 (1868): 374–375; Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 7: no. 1017, 198–202.

45 John Calvin and Pierre Viret to Guillaume Farel at Neuchâtel [circa 4] December 1541. Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 7: no. 1076, 373, "Interest enim ipsorum maximi, quae Rex illis concessit, non sinere ita perire. Res erit facilis impetratu apud eos. Et si serió compositae fuerint literae, quod libenter faciet Gironus. pudebit Regem non praestare quod illis semel promisit. Erit tamen tutius nuncium mittere, aut ita commendare legato literas, quae responsum habeant. Si videtur expedire, literas meas adjungi ad sororem [Marguerite] tantùm indicate."

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and the alliance was on course, Calvin had evidently lost faith in the whole scheme because persecution continued in France. This is evident in his doubts about the optimistic reports Antoine Froment brought back from Lyon after a personal interview with Marguerite and other evangelical courtiers. Writing to his close confident Pierre Viret, Calvin disparages Froment's gullibility and the good faith of French evangelicals:

> Froment … reports that the Queen of Navarre is at present even better disposed than ever she was; and he even gives the assurance in her own words, for he was admitted to familiar conversation with her at an interview.… He has spread a report through the whole city that he was very near preaching before the King himself. There are a thousand silly statements of this sort. That you may not think, however, that all he says is false, part of what he says he heard from the Queen or her ministers. But these artful courtiers wish that such a report may reach Germany and reconcile the minds of the godly to the King, whom they know at present to be entirely estranged from Him. Among other things they persuaded [Froment] that the Chancellor [Guillaume Poyet] was imprisoned on no heavier charge than because, without the orders of the King, he had directed the promulgation of that edict about books, and had caused the godly to be burnt. What more need I say?[46]

46 Calvin to Viret, Geneva, 19 August 1542. Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 8; no. 1149, 106–108. "Frumentus nuper Lugduno rediit. Refert Reginam Navarree meliore nunc esse animo, quàm unquam fuerit. Verùm refert ex ejus verbis. Nam cum ea familiariter est colloquutus. Tametsi non omnibus etiam nuntii verbis fidem temere habendam nosti. Sic enim hac gloria inebriatus est, quod in colloquium Reginae admissus sit, ut particulam sani cerebri quod illi restabat, mihi videatur prorsùs amisisse. Nam prêter caeteras ineptias, cum diceret Réginam meas literas desiderare, mihi volebat dictare argumentum et quasi parùm ingenio meo fideret, vetabat ne quid mitterem, nisi antè à se lectum ac recognitum. Rumorem in tota urbe dissipavit, minimùm abfuisse, quin coram Rege concionatus fuerit. Mille sunt ejus generis. Ne tamen putes ipsum omnia mentiri, partem eorum quae narrat, habet vel a Regina, vel ab ejus ministris. Sed artifices aulici cum viderent hominem credulum, ejus facilitate abusi sunt in suum commodum, ut haec fama in Germaniam perveniret, quae reconciliaret piorum animos Regi, quos sciunt nunc vehementer alienatos esse. Inter alia persua serunt, Cancellarium non alia magis de causa teneri in carcere quàm quôd injussu Regis edictum illud de libris promulgandum curaverit, piosqûe exuri jusserit. Quid plura." Translation in Calvin, *Tracts and Letters*, 4: no. 90, 330–331.

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Yet only after the alliance fell apart following the duke's defeat in September 1543 did Calvin relaunch his anti-Nicodemite campaign. By 1543 he had evidently given up, not just on Francis, but on Marguerite and her court allies.[47] There is no evidence that he was involved in their last gasp effort in 1545 and after to win Francis I's support for the Schmalkald League as war loomed with the emperor. Calvin had already sealed the split with Marguerite through his public attack in 1545 on several "Spiritual Libertines" residing at her court. She responded by sending him a messenger to convey her displeasure. He rejoined by dashing off a self-justifying letter in reply.[48]

As we have seen above, contemporary and retrospective sources show that Calvin, who himself must have been a bearer of memories of the Meaux reform and was apprised of the scope of French evangelicals' major reform initiatives from the early 1530s onward, crossed paths with its current and ex-members of the network many times. References in Calvinist sources to such encounters,

47 Evidently, if Calvin did not trust Marguerite and the court evangelicals, he still wanted whatever aid they could provide. Viret noted in a letter of circa November 1543 to Calvin that the delegation Calvin had sent to the Queen of Navarre by way of Bern (evidently to garner their corroborating support), had not yet returned from Bern. Viret does not mention the purpose of the delegation (CO 12, no. 512, col. 640). Bern had previously intervened with Marguerite to promote international evangelical politics and in support of various French evangelicals, most recently in July 1542, on behalf of Claude de Tournon, the converted nephew of the conservative Cardinal François de Tournon (Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 8: no. 1133, 63). As late as 1545, Farel still counted on her support for the persecuted Waldensians; CO 12, no. 629, col. 58; no. 643, cols. 79–81.

48 Calvin at Geneva to Marguerite of Navarre [possibly at Nérac], 28 April 1545. This is the only surviving letter of Calvin to Marguerite and the only one which Calvin specifically chose to be included in the selection of his letters he left for Beza to edit. Calvin would have been aware by 1538 at the latest of Marguerite's association with the Spiritual Libertines when Bucer warned her about them (Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance*, 5: no. 721, 38–42; CO 10 B, no. 125, cols. 215–217). Her association with them, compounded by her directing three of them to stay with Bucer in Strasbourg and later Geneva over the period 1540–1544, could not, however, have been decisive in causing Calvin's falling out with Marguerite, Roussel, and other 'orthodox' French evangelicals since he held off making his formal attacks on the Spiritual Libertines by name until 1545, that is, well after he had made his initial attack (1537) and second more sustained one (late 1543 and following) against the more important problem of the Nicodemites. For discussion, see Reid, *King's Sister*, 2: 557–560; Cottret, *Calvin*, 280–286; and Mirjam van Veen's extensive introduction to her edition of Calvin's *Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des libertins qui se nomment spirituelz … Response à un certain Holandois* (ed. Mirjam van Veen, Ioannis Calvini Opera Opm Omnia, Scripta Didactica et Polemica, vol. 1 (Geneva: Librarie Droz, 2005), with brief mention of Marguerite's connection, pp. 24–25. Francis Higman makes the important observation that Calvin wrote most of his polemical works, such as those against the Libertines, at the request of others. His attacks on the Nicodemites came from his own animus. See Higman, "I Came Not to Send Peace, but a Sword."

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however, appear less often than one might expect. Oddly neither Calvin nor his biographers Nicolas Colladon or Beza ever recall his close proximity as a teenager to the Meaux reform or what, if anything, it or its suppression may have meant to him over the years. In his surviving correspondence from 1531 onwards, Calvin rarely refers to Roussel, Marguerite of Navarre, or Lefèvre. He also never named any of them in his published writings, including his Bible prefaces and biblical commentaries, especially those on the Psalms or Pauline epistles, where one might expect, if anywhere, some homage to Lefèvre to appear. Yet, both his biographers relate that in 1534 while on his road to conversion, Calvin sought out Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, who was in retirement in Marguerite's court at Nérac in southwest France, to pay him homage. Lefèvre, they report, gave him his blessing. They also note that Calvin collaborated and then clashed with several ex-Meaux members, most notably Pierre Caroli, who sought to ruin Calvin's reputation in the late 1530s and again in 1545. But never do Calvin or his biographers give a coherent account of or credit to Marguerite and her allies for their serious but unsuccessful twenty-five-year-long campaign to convert Francis I or their efforts to disseminate evangelical doctrines from pulpits in the French churches and via print.[49] No credit is given to them for their revisions to the liturgy including intoning the Lord's Prayer instead of the traditional Ave Maria before preaching, introducing vernacular scripture reading, and their refashioning of confession and the Eucharistic liturgy along evangelical lines.

5 Conclusion

This paper has sought to contribute to our understanding of Calvin's early development and career as a reformer by juxtaposing both his anti-Nicodemite program as well as his and his follower's biographical accounts his early life in France against the deeds, beliefs, and reform aspirations of the evangelical circles from which he emerged. For Reformation studies, the burning issue is not, in the end, why Calvin, Farel, and Viret, adopted their anti-Nicodemite stance and rejected the French evangelicals' quest for magisterial reform in France. The important historical question, rather, is how their campaign against Nicodemism may have shaped over the long term the choices of evangelicals living under the cross in France and elsewhere. That question, which lies outside the scope of this paper, is one of the foci of my current research on the evangelical movement in France from 1520 through the decision of growing

49 As do the Protestant Johann Sturm and the Catholic Florimond de Raemond in their retrospective accounts. See Reid, *King's Sister*, 2: 567–568.

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numbers of its members after 1555 to constitute Reformed churches and eventually to rise in revolt in 1562 to defend their faith and even to win crown and kingdom to, as they saw it, true religion. One way to assess the impact of Calvin's anti-Nicodemite campaign on French evangelicals would be to count how many abstained from the mass and other Catholic rites or alternately sought exile abroad. Records of clerics complaining about non-participation in Catholic rites exist but have yet to be systematically exploited. From Genevan and other records, however, we do know that the French evangelical diaspora's ranks did indeed swell over time. The great period of migration, however, was not in the 1540s when Calvin, Viret, and Farel published the majority of their anti-Nicodemite tracts, but in the 1550s. Stranger still, the flow of refugees accelerated greatly towards the end of that decade, precisely during the period when Reformed churches were being formed underground in France, thus giving believers a viable ecclesiastical alternative to the traditional church and evangelical communities within it.[50] Given that data, we can be certain that Calvin's mere articulation in Latin of the imperative to abstain from idolatry in 1537 and his concerted effort from late 1543 onward to broadcast his ultimatum widely in the vernacular were not in themselves decisive in convincing French evangelicals either to flee or to form Reformed churches.[51] A number of real-world conditions would seem to have prompted them finally to make one of those choices, including: increased levels of persecution in France in the mid-1550s; the growing attractiveness and viability of making a new life abroad in the diaspora, especially in Calvin's stable and welcoming Geneva after 1555; the advent in France of a new generation of noble patrons of reform in the late 1550s; increasing apocalyptic fervor; and most importantly, the destabilization of royal power following the death of Henry II in 1559. Absent the conjunction of these factors, one surmises that Calvin's anti-Nicodemite campaign would

50 Jonathan A. Reid, "French Evangelical Networks to 1555: Proto-churches?" in *La Réforme en France et en Italie: Contacts, comparaisons et contrastes*, ed. Philip Benedict, Silvana Seidel-Menchi, and Alain Tallon, Collection de l'École française de Rome 384 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 105–124.

51 Scholars who have concentrated on Calvin and his colleagues' published works and letters, such as Eire, Millet, Christoph Burger, Higman, Roussel, Szczech, and Jon Balserak, have done vital work in explicating their anti-Nicodemite theory and reform imperatives as well as Calvin's self-fashioning in the 1540s, variously, as 'master of his friends,' 'counselor' of his contemporaries, and 'prophet' of reform. But such internist approaches cannot explain (nor understandably claim to do so) the nearly two-decade gap between the articulation of Calvin and company's hard line against Nicodemism, which developed in lock-step with his adoption of his 'prophetical' self-fashioning, and the actual transition in France or elsewhere "From iconoclasm [in theory] to revolution," (title of chapter 8 in Eire, *War Against the Idols*).

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have continued to have little effect: a hypothesis that has yet to be fully measured or tested.

ANNEX 5.1 Chronology of correspondence, texts, and published works bearing on Calvin's Anti-Nicodemism and criticism of French evangelicals

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Bolded = Calvin's Published works against Nicodemites and Spiritual Libertines; MN=Marguerite of Navarre

1533 – Paris: Gérard Roussel preaches evangelical Lenten sermons; Calvin reports on satirical play against MN and Roussel and conservatives' attempts to censure her *Le miroir de l'ame pecherresse*; Nicolas Cop delivers evangelical All Saints' Day Oration to the university calling for the free preaching of the Gospel; René Du Bellay helps Cop to flee; Nicolas Bourbon and Calvin are investigated for heresy at university.

1534 – Calvin flees Paris with MN's help; renounces his benefices at Noyon; visits Lefèvre d'Étaples at Nérac; and stays with friends in Poitiers and Angoulême.

1534/35 winter – Calvin flees France with Louis Du Tillet during the persecution in response to the 1534/35 Plarcards against the Mass.

1535 – Pierre Robert Olivétan publishes his French translation of the Bible with a preface, "Aux tous amateurs" (anonymous, but attributed to Calvin – see 1543 *Deux epistres*) and a Latin privilege signed by Calvin calling on bishops to promote vernacular scriptures.

1535–1536 Clément Marot, in exile following the Placards persecution, stays in Ferrara at the court of Renée de France.

1536 – Basel, Calvin publishes *Institutio* with a prefatory epistle addressed to Francis I, written in defense of evangelicals in response to their persecution following the Placards . It contains a discussion of the pastoral responsibilities of the clergy.

1536 – Geneva town council appeals for help to MN and her ally at court, the Admiral.

1536 – Spring and summer: Calvin leaves Basel to visit the court of Renée de France in Ferrara, then goes to Paris, and while heading back to Basel is called to serve in Geneva by Guilllaume Farel.

1536, Oct. – Calvin participates with Farel, Pierre Viret, and Pierre Caroli in the Lausanne Disputation.

1537 – ***Epistolae duae***

1. Becomes ***Petit traicté monstrant*** (1543)
2. Becomes ***Traité des benefices*** (1554)

Directed against two unnamed former friends among French evangelicals who were compromising sinfully with the papal church. According to Theodore Beza, the first targets Nicolas Duchemin, the second Gérard Roussel.

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ANNEX 5.1 Chronology of correspondence, texts, and published works bearing (*cont.*)

1537 April – Charles de Sainte-Marthe writes to Calvin from Poitiers.

1537 Summer – Calvin writes a long letter to Renée de France warning against Nicodemism, *Epistolae*, vol. 1, no. 42, 218–232. Never published.

1537–1538 – Letters by Calvin to Bucer and Farel to Capito (May 1538) complaining about the Strasbourg Reformers' leniency towards 'Nicodemites' in France, denouncing the latter for seeking positions while claiming to promote the Gospel.

1538 – Louis Du Tillet's correspondence with Bucer and Calvin about nature of the true church and vestige of it in the corrupted Catholic Church. Du Tillet appeals to Bucer and Capito against Calvin's position.

1539, May – Johannes Sleidan, from Paris, to Calvin, affirming his great admiration and their mutual friendship with Johann Sturm.

1539, Nov. – Calvin warns Strasbourg diplomats about trusting Marguerite's overtures.

1539 / French, 1540 – *Sadoleti epistola* & *Calvini responsio*.

1539 – Calvin writes his commentary on Romans, which contains, contends Girardin, passages against Nicodemism.

1540, Apr. – Farel reports to Calvin about the preaching and teaching of Gérard Roussel and Georges de Selve in their dioceses and asks Calvin to encourage them.

1540, Sept. 12 – Calvin writes and sends his epistle *De fugiendis impiorum illicitis* from Strasbourg, but only publishes it in 1543 with the *Petit traité*.

1540–41 – Calvin and Marguerite's correspondence:
– 1540 Sept. Calvin to MN
– 1541 Apr. Calvin to MN
– 1541 July MN to Calvin
– 1541 Dec. Calvin to MN

1540/41 – Bucer writes *Consilium theologicum privatim conscriptum* in part against Calvin's *Epistolae duae.*

1541 June – Cleves-Albret marriage, sealing quasi-alliance between France and Schmalkald League.

1540–1544 – Spiritual Libertines at Strasbourg and Geneva.

1541 – Pierre Viret, *Epistre pour consoler les fideles qui souffrent persecution.* See *Deux epitres* 1543 below.

1542 Aug. – Calvin gives Viret a critical report on Antoine Froment's gullibility in believing Marguerite and other French evangelicals were serious about supporting reform.

1542 Fall–1544 – Marot at Geneva, then Turin.

1543 Sept. – The Duke of Cleves is defeated and capitulates to Charles V; the raison d'être of the Cleves-Albret marriage is over.

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ANNEX 5.1 Chronology of correspondence, texts, and published works bearing (*cont.*)

1543, after Sept. 8 – ***Petit traicté monstrant que doit faire un fidele entre les papistes***, the first anti-Nicodemite tract in French directed to evangelicals in France. See *Epistolae duae* (1537).

1543 – Pierre Viret, *Espistre envoyée aux fideles conversans entre les chrestiens papistiques* praises Calvin's *Petit traicté*.

1543 – John Calvin and Pierre Viret, *Deux epistres. L'une demonstre commment Jesus Christ est la fin de la loy; l'autre pour consoler les fideles qui souffrent persecution*. [Geneva: Jean Girard]

1. Calvin's anonymous preface to Olivétan's 1535 Bible amended. Published at head of Bible/NT reprints 1536, 1538, 1539, but not NTs of 1538 and 1543.
2. Viret's *Epistre pour consoler les fideles*, which had been published before by Girard in 1541.

1543, before Oct.–Nov. – Calvin sent a delegation to Marguerite of Navarre via Bern after the breakup on the Cleves-Navarre marriage alliance in September. Its purpose is unknown. Viret attests to this delegation and that as of November it had not returned from Bern.

1543–1544 – Antoine Fumée writes to Calvin to protest his harsh treatment of French evangelicals in his *Petit traicté*.

1544 – ***Excuse aux M. les Nicodemites,*** Calvin's response to French evangelicals upset by his ***Petit traicté*** containing new attacks against various types of Nicodemites in all three estates.

1544–1545 – Responding to the French evangelicals' objection that he is too harsh, Calvin writes to Melanchthon, Bucer and others for their opinions on Nicodemism.

1545 – ***Petit traicté monstrant que doit faire un fidele entre les papistes*** & ***Excuse faicte sur cela aux Nicodemites*** [***Excuse aux M. les Nicodemites***] the latter augmented with letters from Melanchthon, Bucer, and Pierre Martyr Vermigli and a further two by Calvin on Nicodemism.

1545 – ***Contre la furieuse secte des Libertins***, containing a favorable mention of Étienne de La Forge at whose house in Paris Calvin encountered the spiritualist Quintin in 1533–1534 and who was later executed after the Placards. Cf. 1534 *Psychopannycia*. Marguerite succored de La Forge's widow and son after his execution.

1545, Jan. – Calvin advises Melanchthon not to be taken in by the French courtiers' overtures, reminding him of their similar attempts to woo him and the German Protestats in 1533–1535.

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ANNEX 5.1 Chronology of correspondence, texts, and published works bearing (*cont.*)

1545, Mar./Apr. – As related to by Calvin to Farel, Michel Cop arrived in Geneva ([April 1545], CO 12, no. 633, 62–64; 64). He had fled France and abandoned his post as canon of Clairac, where he was presumably in close proximity to Gérard Roussel, who was Abbot of Clairac. Very likely, Cop delivered letters or reports to Calvin relating Marguerite of Navarre's discontent at his attack on the Spiritual Libertines.

1545, Apr. – Calvin writes to MN to justify his attack on the Spiritual Libertines. He calls on Gérard Roussel as a witness to his steadfastness in not denying his faith while in France.

1545, Apr.–May – Farel relates to Calvin Marguerite's protest to Francis I about the massacre of the Waldensians.

1545 – ***Pro G. Farello adversus Caroli***, against Pierre Caroli, doctor of Theology at Paris, former member of the Meaux group, who joined Farel, Viret, and Calvin in exile in 1535, becoming successively their co-worker and critic before returning to the Catholic fold.

1548 Apr. – Gilles Michaux [Michael] reports to Calvin from Montpellier that Pocque was slandering Calvin at Marguerite's court.

1549–1550 – Claude Baduel reports from France to Melanchthon and Calvin on Marguerite's support for evangelicals.

1550 – ***De scandalis / Des scandales***, Calvin denounces François Rabelais, Bonaventure Des Périers († 1544), Étienne Dolet († 1546), and other evangelical writers by name.

1550 – ***De vitiandis superstitionibus & Excusatio ad pseudonicodemos avec les avis de Melanchthon, Bucer, et Pierre Martyr***, Latin translation of the 1545 *Petit traicté* and *Excuse aux Nicodémites* including the supplemental letters by Melanchthon, Bucer, Pierre Martyr Vermigli, and Calvin on Nicodemism.

1550 – Calvin 'brags' to Melanchthon that many refugees are coming to Geneva.

1552 – ***Quatre sermons*** vs. Nicodemism with Latin translation by Claude Baduel in 1552 *Opuscules*. First anti-Nicodemite work to advocate exile as an option to the Nicodemite dilemma.

1554 – ***Traité des benefices***, first French translation of the second of the 1537 *Epistolae duae*.

1557 – Calvin publishes his Psalms commentary in whose preface he reflects on his time in France 1533–1534 avoiding all mention of the broader context of the evangelicals offensive of that summer or broader program of reform.

1564, 1565 &1575 – Beza and Nicolas Colladon write successively enlarged biographies of Calvin; Beza's 1575 final Latin version contains many more mentions of Marguerite, Roussel, and other French evangelicals with whom Calvin had extensive dealings in his early years.

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ANNEX 5.2 Principal figures of the Meaux group 1521–1525

Bold = Persons with whom Calvin is known later to have had direct dealings

1. François Vatable
2. **Gérard Roussel**
3. Guillaume Briçonnet
4. **Guillaume Farel** (leaves by end of 1523)
5. **Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples**
6. **Jean Le Comte de la Croix**
7. Martial Mazurier
8. **Marguerite of Navarre**
9. Michel d'Arande (often also preaching at court, Alençon, and Bourges)
10. **Pierre Caroli** (in Paris)
11. Pauvan
12. un 'écolier' (according to Nicole Le Maître, possibly the future bishop and foe of evangelicals and the Reformed, Georges d'Armagnac)

SOURCE (WITH ADDITIONS): MICHEL VEISSIÈRE, *L'ÉVÊQUE GUILLAUME BRIÇONNET (1470–1534): CONTRIBUTION À LA CONNAISSANCE DE LA RÉFORME CATHOLIQUE À LA VEILLE DU CONCILE DE TRENTE* (PROVINS: SOCIÉTÉ D'HISTOIRE ET D'ARCHÉOLOGIE, 1986).

ANNEX 5.3 Other members of the Navarrian network with whom Calvin had dealings

Bourges sodality in the early 1530s: Melcior Wolmar and other evangelicals including clerics mentioned in Table 4

Marguerite of Navarre's court in 1533 at Paris and in Nérac when Calvin visited Lefèvre in 1534

Guillaume, Jean, and René Du Bellay and their operatives, including Johann Sturm and Johannes Sleidan, as early as 1533 in Paris, certainly by 1538 in Strasbourg

Nicolas Bourbon, possibly known to Calvin as early as the winter of 1533–1534 at the University of Paris when they were both investigated for heresy

The Spiritualists Quintin, Bertrand of Moulins,l Claude Perceval, and Anthoine Pocque, 1533–1534 in Paris and later in Strasbourg and Geneva

Morelet du Museau family in Swiss Cantons 1535/6 onwards

Renée de France and her court (Mme. de Soubise et al.) at Ferrara 1536

Claude Baduel at Strasbourg in 1536 and 1550 and after at Geneva

Pierre Toussaint, almoner of MN, pastor of Montbéliard, 1536 and after

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ANNEX 5.3 Other members of the Navarrian network with whom Calvin had dealings (*cont.*)

Antoine Froment and Marie Dentière 1536 and after at Geneva

Charles de Sainte-Marthe, who writes fan letter to Calvin from Poitiers 1537, reporting on Calvin's good reputation among friends there
Clément Marot in Geneva 1542, possibly earlier in Paris in 1533
Antione Fumée, Parisian Parlementairian, 1544

ANNEX 5.4 Notable Instances of preaching or evangelizing beyond Meaux, 1521–1535

Bold = with whom Calvin later had direct dealings

Alençon – Michel d'Arande, OSA, 1523, Jean Du Mesnil 1523, **Pierre Caroli** 1526–1533, Étienne Le Court, c. 1528–†1533; other clerics indicted during Alençon investigation: priests Paul Graindorge, Jean Chassevent, and Guillaume Rolland, and friars Dufour, OSA, and Germain
Amiens – An unnamed canon of Amiens 1523, M. Jehan Cauwart, chaplain priest of Amiens, an unnamed Minime 1530; **Jean Morand** 1533
Blois – Michel d'Arande , OSA, 1523, **Gérard Roussel** 1527, **Matthieu Malingre**, OP, 1527
Bourges – Michel d'Arande 1523–1524; **Melchor Wolmar** at university c. 1530–1534; Arnaud de Bronosse, OSA, 1533; **Jean Chaponneau**, OSB, canon of St. Ambroise, Doctor of Theology, preached after 1533, Calvin reported to have known him there c. 1531; **Jean Michel**, OSB, active c. 1533, executed in Bourges in 1539; Pierre de Nuptiis, OFM, active at Bourges after condemnation by Paris Faculty of Theology 1534
Grenoble – Aimé Maigret, OP, 1524
Lyon – Aimé Maigret, OP, 1524
Mâcon – Michel d'Arande, OP, 1524
Paris – **Pierre Caroli** and Martial Mazurier, 1521–1525; **Guillaume Farel** 1523, **Gérard Roussel** 1524, 1533–1534 with **Élie (Jean) Courault**, OSA, François Bertaud, OSA, and Jean Le Rentif (Rétif); **Nicolas Cop** and the "famulus" of Nicolas Bourbon, 1533
Rouen –Aimé Maigret 1522, Jean de Caulle 1528, an unnamed young preacher 1529, Roger Mustel, curate of Sainct Aulbin of Rouen, 1530, Thomas Daoust 1531, Antoine Le Conte 1533, Richard Le Blond 1534, Fr. Geoffroy Du Coudray 1535
Toulouse – Jean de Caturce, Jean de Boysonné, three unnamed Augustinian friars, and an extensive circle based at the university known to **Étienne Dolet** 1532

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CHAPTER 6

The Sounds and Silence of the Early Reformation in Geneva in Jeanne de Jussie's *Short Chronicle*

Carrie F. Klaus

1 Introduction

Jeanne de Jussie, a young nun in the only women's religious house in Geneva during the Reformation, the Convent of St. Clare, describes in her *Short Chronicle*[1] the shifting political alliances among Geneva and its neighbors beginning in the 1520s, the impact of this instability in the region, repeated failures of diplomacy, the beginning of Reformed preaching in Geneva, escalating violence, city officials' attempts to maintain order, changes in religious practice as the Reformation gains ground, the decisive Rive Disputation (which the Poor Clares refuse to attend), the penetration and desecration of the Convent of St. Clare and removal of one apostate nun, and, finally, in August 1535, the Poor Clares' departure from Geneva, journey by foot to Annecy, and resettlement in an abandoned Augustinian monastery. Since the publication of a French critical edition in 1996[2] and of a translation into English in 2006,[3] Jussie and her chronicle have become increasingly present in popular, academic, and even artistic imaginations.

Visitors to Geneva can now learn about Jussie on walking tours devoted to exceptional women and offered in French, German, English, and Italian by the

1 *Short Chronicle* is the English translation of a term in the first line of Jussie's untitled manuscript: "S'ensuyt vne petite cronique [...]." Jeanne de Jussie, *Petite chronique*, ed. Helmut Feld (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1996), 3.

2 With introduction and notes in German, Helmut Feld's edition includes transcriptions of two extant manuscripts (one presumed to be in Jussie's own hand) without modernization of spelling or punctuation. Feld also published a translation into German the same year: Jeanne de Jussie, *Kleine Chronik: Bericht einer Nonne über die Anfänge der Reformation in Genf*, ed. and trans. Helmut Feld (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1996).

3 Jeanne de Jussie, *The Short Chronicle: A Poor Clare's Account of the Reformation of Geneva*, ed. and trans. Carrie F. Klaus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). The English translation is part of the series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, designed to be useful to both students and scholars. Parenthetical references within the body of the essay are to this translation.

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Guides du patrimoine.[4] In an article for the Genevan weekly magazine *Écho* in 2012, "Genève en 1535: La dernière nuit des Clarisses," Bernard Hodel describes Jussie's portrayal of the Poor Clares' difficult last night in their convent.[5] In 2014, historian and novelist Anne Noschis published an engaging edition of Jussie's narrative in modern French, titled playfully, *Jeanne de Jussie, ou comment résister aux réformateurs*.[6] In 2015, Anne Morddel recommended Jussie's chronicle for summer reading in her "French Genealogy Blog."[7] In 2017, the Domaine Château-L'Évêque in the village of Jussy produced a "Jeanne-de-Jussie" Chardonnay with lively, buttery notes.[8]

Reviews of the English translation of Jussie's chronicle highlight the volume's usefulness in the classroom, a chief goal of *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* series in which it appeared.[9] Reviewers stress the importance of Jussie's perspective on the Reformation as an adherent to traditional practice and belief. Cathy Hampton, for example, observes that "Undergraduate French Reformation syllabi have long been dominated by writers who privilege the intellectual, affective, and political advantages of reform – Marot, Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre, Calvin. Jussie's *Short Chronicle* will provide a very useful counterweight." She adds, "Students whose picture of orthodox Catholicism have been influenced by the critical tones of the *Heptaméron* or an Erasmian colloquy will find here a warm, human celebration of the spiritual benefits of the old faith."[10] The inclusion of excerpts from Jussie's chronicle in a

4 "Guided Tours with Mrs. Marlyse Beldi," *Guided Tours in Geneva and in the Pays de Vaud*, accessed 9 July 2018, http://www.guides-geneve.ch/guides_en_Beldi.htm.

5 Bernard Hodel, "Genève en 1535: La dernière nuit des Clarisses," *Écho Magazine* (13 September 2012), accessed 9 July 2018, http://www.echomagazine.ch/archives/articles-2012/5-a-la-deux/154-la-derniere-nuit-des-clarisses.

6 Anne Noschis, *Jeanne de Jussie, ou comment résister aux réformateurs* (Geneva: Slatkine, 2014).

7 Anne Morddel, "Summer Reading: *The Short Chronicle*," accessed 9 July 2018, http://french-genealogy.typepad.com/genealogie/2015/06/summer-reading-the-short-chronicle.html.

8 "Chardonnay barrique 2017 'Jeanne de Jussie,'" *Domaine Château L'Évêque*, accessed 9 July 2018, http://www.chateauleveque.ch/shop/75cl/chardonnay-barrique-2017jeanne-de-jussie/.

9 See, for example, Karen E. Spierling, "Jeanne de Jussie, *The Short Chronicle: A Poor Clare's Account of the Reformation of Geneva*, ed. and trans. Carrie F. Klaus," *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities & Social Sciences* (H-France, September 2006); Catherine Randall, "*The Short Chronicle* by Jeanne de Jussie," *Women in French Studies* 15, no. 1 (2007): 157–8; Susan R. Boettcher, "Jeanne de Jussie, *The Short Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Carrie F. Klaus," *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities & Social Sciences* (H-Catholic, February 2008); Julie Hotchin, "*The Short Chronicle: A Poor Clare's Account of the Reformation of Geneva*," *Parergon* 26, no. 2 (2009): 209–10.

10 Cathy Hampton, "Review of *Jeanne de Jussie: The Short Chronicle. A Poor Clare's Account of the Reformation of Geneva.* Trans. C.F. Klaus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 61, no. 1 (2010): 410–2.

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variety of anthologies published since 2008 attests to its value in the classroom as well.[11] Compilers often pair Jussie with one of her Reformed counterparts, either Marie Dentière or Katharina Schütz Zell, women who became outspoken advocates for the Reformation in Geneva and Strasbourg respectively, and whose works have also been translated into English and published in the *Other Voice* series.[12]

There is some disagreement among critics over interpretations of Jussie's chronicle as a gendered or even feminist text. Pollie Bromilow points out that Jussie "elucidates the prominent role of women on both sides of the religious revolution,"[13] and Karen Spierling comments that she "depicts women on both sides of the religious divide as more strong and brave than men."[14] Andrew Chibi, by contrast, finds readings of Jussie that draw attention to gender to be overblown.[15] Critics offer a more unified assessment of Jussie's skill and effectiveness as a writer. Catherine Randall cites her strategic references to miracles, her nuanced portraits, and her suggestive orthography as signs of her intentionality.[16] Julie Hotchin notes "the immediacy of Jussie's style,"[17] and Charlotte Woodford calls her chronicle a "vivid and highly readable account."[18] Susan Boettcher writes similarly that "what makes Jussie's memoir such a

11 Denis R. Janz, *A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 402; Amy R. Caldwell et al., *Sources of Western Society*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, *From Antiquity to Enlightenment* (Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 227; Felicity Leng, *Consecrated Spirits: A Thousand Years of Spiritual Writing by Women Religious* (London: Canterbury Press, 2011), 150; Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 160–1; John A. Wagner, *Voices of the Reformation: Contemporary Accounts of Daily Life* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2015), 200–2.

12 Marie Dentière, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre and Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin*, ed. and trans. Mary B. McKinley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Katharina Schütz Zell, *The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, ed. and trans. Elsie McKee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

13 Pollie Bromilow, "Jeanne de Jussie: *The Short Chronicle*, ed. Carrie F. Klaus; Louise Labé: *Complete Poetry and Prose*, ed. Deborah Lesko Baker; Madeleine and Catherine des Roches: *From Mother and Daughter: Poems, Dialogues, and Letters of Les Dames des Roches*, ed. Anne R. Larsen," *Journal of European Studies* 38, no. 4 (2008): 450.

14 Spierling, "Jeanne de Jussie."

15 Andrew Chibi, "*The Short Chronicle: A Poor Clare's Account of the Reformation of Geneva* by Jeanne de Jussie, Carrie F. Klaus," *SCJ* 39, no. 2 (2008): 603–4.

16 Randall, "*The Short Chronicle*," 158.

17 Hotchin, "*The Short Chronicle*," 210.

18 Charlotte Woodford, review of *Church Mother: The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, by Katharina Schütz Zell, ed. and trans. Elsie McKee, and *The Short Chronicle: A Poor Clare's Account of the Reformation of Geneva*, by Jeanne de Jussie, ed. and trans. Carrie F. Klaus, *Renaissance Studies* 21, no. 5 (November 2007): 746.

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wonderful read is her record of exactly how her convent refuge was barricaded and eventually breached, including a great deal of the appertaining dialogue."[19] Jussie does not tell; she shows. Chibi, again, provides an opposing view, calling Jussie's chronicle "a mixed bag of truths, assumptions, half-truths, exaggerations, and outright fantasies."[20] Of course, if Jussie's goals are polemical or literary, rather than historical, then these "exaggerations" and "fantasies" are craft.

Serious scholarship on Jussie remains relatively limited. Linguist Sara Cotelli contends that Jussie's language bears witness to her conception of herself as a literary writer.[21] Whereas Feld observes in the introduction to his edition of her chronicle that Jussie's account is essentially a transcription of oral speech ("'gesprochene' Sprache"),[22] Cotelli argues instead that Jussie's excellent syntax, rich and varied lexicon, and choice to write in French (she would have spoken savoyard, a dialect of francoprovençal, in her daily life[23]) place her narrative squarely in a written tradition. In addition, Cotelli observes that Jussie's avoidance of archaic and regional expressions and her preference for Latin-influenced constructions demonstrate her desire to compose a literary text. Historian Elisabeth Wengler maintains that Jussie casts her chronicle deliberately as a tale of triumph. Wengler emphasizes Jussie's portrayal of the Poor Clares as opponents rather than victims of the Reformation, despite the fact that the nuns ultimately sought exile from Geneva. "Even though they had to leave Geneva for a new convent in Annecy," Wengler writes, "the value of convent life was affirmed."[24] To be sure, presenting the Reformation of Geneva as a victory for displaced Catholic nuns requires a masterful storyteller.

The most remarkable use of Jussie's words in recent years is connected to an artistic installation in spring 2016 on two small islands off the coast of western

19 Boettcher, "Jeanne de Jussie."

20 Chibi, "*The Short Chronicle*," 604.

21 Sara Cotelli, "*La Petite Chronique* de Jeanne de Jussie et le français régional de Genève à l'aube du XVIe siècle: étude lexicale," *Vox romanica* 66 (2007): 83.

22 "Der Text enthält auch viele volkstümliche und mundartliche Wendungen. Kurz: es ist eine lebendige, 'gesprochene' Sprache, ohne gehobene literarischen Anspruch." Helmut Feld, introduction to *Petite chronique*, Jeanne de Jussie, xxiv.

23 Cotelli describes a "situation triglossique" in Geneva at the time of the Reformation, that is, the simultaneous presence of (1) oral languages, especially savoyard, in daily use; (2) French, in the majority of written documents; and (3) Latin, in official texts such as Genevan council registers. Cotelli writes, "Vu le public auquel elle était destinée, cette oeuvre aurait pu être écrite en savoyard." Cotelli, "*La Petite Chronique*," 87. Jussie, however, had higher ambitions for her text.

24 Elisabeth Wengler, "'That in future times they will know our suffering for the love of God …' Jeanne de Jussie's *Petite Chronique* and the Creation of Convent Identity," in *The Cloister and the World: Early Modern Convent Voices*, ed. Thomas M. Carr (Charlottesville, VA: Rookwood, 2007), 27.

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Scotland, Lewis and Iona, a collaboration among visual artists Mhairi Killin and Hugh Watt, musician John Purser, and writer Alastair McIntosh. This project, titled "Re-Soundings," explores how the bell as a material object takes on different shapes and meanings as Christianity evolves over time. The website documenting the installation begins with this excerpt (slightly altered) from Jussie's *Short Chronicle*:

> On the next Wednesday (May 12th) those dogs removed the bell from Notre Dame de Grace and threw it down from the Steeple to destroy it. Afterwards they went to see the bells at the monastery of Palais and at the parish of Saint-Gervais because they wanted to melt them down and make weapons to use against monseigneur and the Christians.[25]

The artists consider bells in early churches on these two islands, their removal during the Reformation, and the resulting "bell-less belfries" today. The project included a performance on a new set of handbells created from brass shell casings dating from World War I, a reversal of the bells-to-weapons move that Jussie fears and describes in the passage quoted above. This collaborative work points to a fascinating topic yet to be fully explored in Jussie's chronicle: the acoustic environment, or soundscape, of Geneva during the tumultuous years of the early Reformation.[26] In his study of the Renaissance in Florence, Niall

25 Mhairi Killin and Hugh Watt, "Re-Soundings," accessed 11 July 2018, https://re-soundings.com/. The original passage is found in Jussie, *Short Chronicle*, 122. The Scottish artists delete a sentence in which Jussie notes the bells' resilience to attack ("It was said that several of them struck it as hard as they could with stones and hammers, but they could not damage it."), a remark that echoes the miracles of incorruptible flesh that are found in the chronicle.

26 An important early publication in this area of investigation is R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1993). More recent works focusing on specific historical settings include Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Music, Acoustics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); and Niall Atkinson, *The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016). Brigitte Cazelles considers acoustics in a French literary context in *Soundscape in Early French Literature* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005). Most directly relevant to Jussie's chronicle is Amy C. Graves-Monroe's examination, also from a literary perspective, of sensory aspects of Jean Crespin's *Book of Martyrs* and other texts written during the Wars of Religion. Amy C. Graves-Monroe, "Soundscapes of the Wars of Religion: Sensory Crisis and the Collective Memory of Violence," in *Memory and Community in Sixteenth-Century France*, ed. David P. Laguardia and Cathy Yandell (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 55–69.

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Atkinson stresses the importance of sound in a setting where literacy was the exception rather than the norm. In the early modern city, he writes, "listening to the form and content of the entire acoustic spectrum of bells, trumpets, speeches, rumors, and gossip provided [individuals who were not literate] with the means to mark time, chart politics, fulfill themselves spiritually, and maintain the bonds that connected them to the multiple communities and spaces in which they lived."[27] Readers encounter all of these sounds in Jussie's *Short Chronicle*. Jussie skillfully exploits acoustic elements in her written text both to dramatize her narrative and to preserve more strongly the memory of the events she has experienced, providing readers today with a rich and resonant account of what Genevans heard as they lived through extraordinary changes in their city in the 1520s and 1530s.

2 Bells and Prayers

In the beginning of her chronicle, Jussie describes the Poor Clares' regular prayers in the convent and the bells that ring out for Masses and canonical hours throughout the city, signs of faithful Christians' continued reverence for the Lord and respect for the traditional church. The Reformation disrupts this soundscape. Among the earliest offenses Jussie records is the silencing of bells. Describing events in February 1529, she remarks that

> Also, from that first Sunday [14 February 1529] on, the clergy of the cathedral, parishes, and religious houses inside the city walls were forbidden to ring any bells from seven o'clock in the evening until seven o'clock in the morning, and they could not even sound the city clock. They did not ring the bells or say the "Ave Maria" after compline, which was very strange and seemed like a time of darkness. (41)

The absence of bells marking the time during the night must have been disconcerting to many Genevans, even those who did not offer prayers at canonical hours.

In the first mention of her own convent in her chronicle, Jussie underlines the fact that the ban on ringing bells extends to the Poor Clares as well. Describing events in March 1529, she writes,

27 Atkinson, *The Noisy Renaissance*, 4.

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> From then on, the sisters of Saint Clare were not allowed to ring bells for matins, although they recited them at the usual hour of midnight, until the following Christmas [1529], when they asked messeigneurs of the Council to allow them to ring bells for matins, and their request was granted under the following conditions: that they not ring them very long and not as a signal. The poor sisters lived in great fear and subjection. God alone knows. (42)

Jussie attests here to the multiplicity of uses for bells in the early modern period and the meanings attached to them, as she recalls Genevan officials' specific instructions to the Poor Clares, when they finally agree to let them ring bells for matins, that their bells be used only as a call to prayer and not to broadcast any other information.

Atkinson points to the primacy of bells among the many varied sounds of early modern cities and towns. He writes, "Of the loudest noises premodern communities were likely to hear – thunder, cannon fire, and bells – only bells constituted a regular, rhythmic, densely meaningful acoustic system."[28] Bells were an effective way to send messages to a diverse populace, as all would have understood this system. In addition, sound travels quickly. Bells, Atkinson continues, were

> a mode of mass communication with which no other media in preprint culture could compete in terms of speed, if not complexity. They were an extension of collective or corporate voices, such as the church, religious orders, guilds, the courts, and the governing regime. Unlike visible urban signs, moreover, messages sent by bells could travel around corners and pass through walls.[29]

Arguments over bells in Jussie's narrative stand as a record of conflicts between these collective voices in Geneva during the early Reformation.

Indeed, references to bells abound in the *Short Chronicle*. Bells are stolen, sounded to announce Reformers' "devilish sermons" (54), shot with rifles, rung in distress or as a call to arms and, of course, silenced, as above, to Jussie's great dismay. Jussie expresses particular distaste for the reformers' ringing of bells to announce their preaching in Geneva, an act she interprets rightly as pointed defiance of established religion. She observes that during Holy Week in 1535, for example, reformers "rang the bells for their sermons, and longer than usual,

28 Atkinson, *The Noisy Renaissance*, 11.

29 Atkinson, *The Noisy Renaissance*, 12.

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because the bells were not supposed to be rung on those days according to the rules and customs of the holy church" (117). When the Poor Clares ring their own bells in May 1535, near the end of their time in Geneva and despite a prohibition of which Jussie claims they were unaware, they receive a harsh scolding. "The poor sisters," Jussie writes, "who knew nothing [of the prohibition], rang their bell at midnight as usual for matins, which angered many people; they immediately and impetuously sent guards, and they beat on the main door of the convent so hard that it resounded throughout the convent" (120). Jussie uses auditory elements here to underscore differences between the pious women and their heretical opponents, drawing a contrast between bells rung in the still of the night for prayer and fists pounded in anger on a heavy wooden door. In response to the nuns' request for an explanation, Jussie recalls that "the visitors told them that the nuns were ringing the bells too much and that by the great devil they should not ring them anymore until they had permission" (120). Jussie reminds her audience of the visitors' heretical natures here by making careful note of the blasphemous words they use to denounce the Poor Clares.

Parallel to the reformers' efforts to silence bells in the Convent of St. Clare and to co-opt the sounds of other bells in Geneva are their attempts to use their voices to interrupt and impede traditional songs, prayers and Masses. Jussie writes of an event in May 1533 in which canon Peter Werle's "heart broke when he saw [the heretics] hiding behind a chapel near the choir during singing at Saint Peter's and then howling like rabid wolves to obstruct and corrupt divine worship" (83). This howling propels Werle to run out of the church in an attempt to rally Christians loyal to the traditional church, a decision that exposes him to an armed skirmish in which he is killed.

Jussie describes an evening in October 1534 when reformers similarly interrupt the observation of vespers at the Convent of St. Clare:

> Then in the evening, when the sisters of Saint Clare were saying vespers and the doors had inadvertently been left open [...] a company of those dogs came into the church. Then they turned toward the sisters, who were reciting vespers. All together lifted their heads and began to shout, howl, and bawl at the top of their lungs like enraged wolves, a more hideous sound than was ever heard in the pit of hell, or so it seemed, and they did it to obstruct the divine service. (114)

In direct opposition to the nuns' evening prayers, Jussie compares the reformers' voices to the howls of wolves, again underlining their heretical nature, this time with a reference to "the pit of hell" that precedes mention of "the divine

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service." Undaunted, the nuns persist in their prayers and prevent the reformers from silencing them. Jussie writes, "But Our Lord strengthened the sisters' heart so that without appearing to notice them, with an ardent heart they all raised their voices so high that the intruders could not drown them out, even though they continued from the first psalm all through the chapter" (114). The Poor Clares' victory over the reformers in this case supports Wengler's reading of Jussie's chronicle as a tale of triumph.

Reformers use the same tactics in May 1535 during the first session of the Rive Disputation, according to Jussie. Relating news received, she says, from the convent's confessor, Jussie writes that "when [a pious Dominican monk] tried to answer a question, they all began to spit and make noise, and those dogs howled so much that no one could hear him" (127). Here again, Jussie discredits the reformers by comparing them to subhuman beasts. This Dominican monk is less successful than the Poor Clares in the event described above, however, as his voice is effectively silenced. All three of these incidents support Amy Graves-Monroe's observation, in her study of literary texts emerging from the French Wars of Religion, that "the fight for auditory dominance grows more explosive when each confession strives not only to be heard by potential adherents, but to drown out the rival faith."[30] Graves-Monroe offers a compelling reading of sound as a mode of violence during the wars and shows that attempts to control sensory perception included not only the destruction of visual images (iconoclasm), but also the active and intentional suppression of aural elements.

3 Trumpets, Lamentations, and Indecent Songs

As Jussie depicts disruptions to the traditional acoustic environment of Geneva, she fills the pages of her chronicle with the sounds of crisis. In her record of city officials' attempts to maintain order by issuing bans on behavior inciting sedition and violence, she states that trumpets were played to draw attention to these bans. Relating iconoclastic acts outside of Geneva in October 1530, for example, she writes that "they proclaimed to the sound of a trumpet that, under penalty of the rope, no one should go out and pillage" (52). In June 1532, she notes that "it was proclaimed to the sound of a trumpet that no one should put up any more of those [Lutheran] placards, under penalty of three *traits de corde* and banishment from the city for a year" (71). In December 1533, when Genevans on both sides of the conflict had taken up arms and were preparing

30 Graves-Monroe, "Soundscapes," 65–66.

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to battle, she writes that "The trumpets were immediately sounded again, three times, and then it was proclaimed loudly that Monseigneur of Geneva and messieurs the syndics and governors ordered everyone to retreat and not to bear any more weapons in the city, under penalty of death without mercy" (91). Although less effective than bells, trumpets also played a vital role in transmitting critical information to the inhabitants of a city.

These proclamations do little to maintain order in Geneva, however, and the sounds of crisis in Jussie's chronicle soon come to include the sounds of suffering. When opponents of the Reformation take up arms reluctantly in March 1533, Jussie remarks, "They raised such a wail that it was a very lamentable thing to hear" (77). When Peter Werle is killed in May 1533 in the skirmish mentioned above, she notes that "the people let out a great wail, lamenting and weeping over the innocent man's death" (84). After the desecration of the church of the Monastery of Saint Victor in August 1534, she writes, "It was said that, for a while, when you walked by there you could hear the souls of the departed wailing and lamenting audibly day and night" (106). In her description of the penetration and pillaging of the Convent of Saint Clare in August 1535, she comments that "the poor sisters, with an ardent heart, beginning with mother vicaress and then all in a single, clear, loud voice, cried out for mercy without ceasing, and the terrible cry could be heard faraway," adding, "I believe that such piteous cries and lamentations as the poor sisters made had never been heard before" (140). She underscores the nuns' physical experience of these cries by noting that their voices were "pitiably hoarse" (142) later that day. When city councilors question the nuns individually prior to their departure from Geneva, Jussie comments that "it is impossible to describe the piteous sorrow and lamentations" (161). Vocalizations of anguish pervade Jussie's chronicle until the Poor Clares finally reach a place of refuge in Annecy.

In addition to recording the wails and lamentations of Christians who seek to uphold traditional Catholicism, Jussie alludes to the songs and insults that reformers launch against them, and she again records city officials' attempts to minimize unrest by banning these utterances. In March 1533, she reports, "To keep everyone calm it was proclaimed throughout the city, under penalty of banishment and whipping, that no one should dare to sing any songs or ballads that might start an argument" (79). She notes similar efforts later that same month, observing that "under penalty of being hanged and strangled, no one was to speak ill of or dishonor the church or the holy sacraments or sing songs against the sacraments of the altar" (80). Likewise, she remarks, "under penalty of banishment from the city, no one was to speak ill of or insult anyone by saying 'You are a Lutheran or Mamellus,' as had been done before" (80). Although Jussie indicates that ordinances prohibited insults against both "Lutherans"

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(individuals favoring Reformed ideology) and "Mamellus" (defenders of traditional belief and practice), the taunting she records targets only adherents to the traditional church – often the Poor Clares themselves. She recalls that in April 1535,

> the heretics began to give [the Poor Clares] a lot of trouble, with both words and actions, and disloyal men got up on the city walls right next to the sisters' garden, and all day long they played with their harquebuses and sang indecent songs. The sisters could not go into their garden without the men seeing them and shouting insulting, indecent words at them. (119)

The "indecent songs" ("chanson[s] deshonneste[s]") directed at the women are surely not only theological, but also sexual, in nature. Graves-Monroe's theory of noise "as an ideologically charged polemical weapon that invades or inhabits an extant soundscape"[31] suggests that, irrespective of the specific content of their words, the fact that the heretics have climbed the city walls and positioned themselves in such a way that the nuns cannot avoid hearing them, even in their own garden, is an act of violence.

4 Refusals to Listen

Over and over, though, the Poor Clares refuse to listen. In his analysis of early modern individuals' experiences of the built environment, Atkinson remarks that "Our sense of space depends heavily on our ears which, unlike our eyes, we cannot close."[32] The sisters of Saint Clare, however, do their best to close their ears. The Poor Clares' resistance to the Reformation in Jussie's chronicle is, above all, a refusal to listen to reformers' ideas. When Hemme Faulson, the sister of the one nun (Blaisine Varembert) who finally abjures her vows, comes to the convent in April 1534 to try to convert the Poor Clares, the vicaress tells her, "Lady, we do not wish to hear such talk. If you want to speak with us about Our Lord and piety, as you have done in the past, we will keep you good company, but if you go on like this, we will turn deaf ears to you" (101). When Faulson persists in her preaching, Jussie reports that "mother vicaress and her company stood up and closed the doors to her, telling her that the prelate had forbidden them to listen to these errors. She [Faulson] stayed there for a long time, even

31 Graves-Monroe, "Soundscapes," 64.

32 Atkinson, *The Noisy Renaissance*, 10.

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though her words fell on deaf ears" (101). This scene takes place at the grill separating the Poor Clares' choir from the landing just outside it, an elevated space above the nave in the back of the convent church in which visitors could speak to the cloistered women. By closing the wooden doors on the nuns' side of this grill, the vicaress materializes the Poor Clares' blocking of Faulson's words.

In one of the most powerful episodes in Jussie's chronicle, in which the Poor Clares refuse to listen to Guillaume Farel's preaching inside their convent in July 1535, the vicaress first tells the city officials who accompany him, "Ah, Messieurs, you have betrayed us. I do not wish to hear your sermon of perdition" (130). When Farel preaches anyway – delivering a sermon highlighting the Virgin Mary's activities in the world, denouncing holy seclusion, and advocating marriage – the nuns proceed to shout and cry. The frightened leaders of the convent, with the exception of the vociferous vicaress who is soon thrown out of the room, at first order the nuns to keep quiet: "the utterly terrified confessor and his associate and the mother abbess commanded silence again, saying Saint Paul commands women to keep silence, etc." (131). The determined vicaress beats on the walls, however, shouting so loudly that her voice rises above Farel's. She tells Farel, "Oh, you wretched and wicked coward, you speak your false words in vain. You will gain nothing here," and she encourages the nuns to persist in their refusal to hear him: "I beg you, sisters, not to listen to anything he says" (131). Of this event, Jussie recalls that "Some of the sisters had stuffed their ears with wax so that they would not hear him" (131). In the end, the infuriated Farel leaves the convent. Jussie writes that "that criminal Farel ran to be the first one out; he washed his hands impatiently to cool himself because he felt like he was burning with rage" (132). This episode and Farel's frustration not only demonstrate the power of sound as an instrument of reform, but also show that when the reformers' words are rejected, they have no secondary weapons. Here, again, Jussie portrays the Poor Clares as triumphant.

The nuns continue to rely on refusals to listen as an effective means of resistance. When Faulson returns to speak to the nuns, the vicaress tells her "we do not wish to hear about these innovations of law" (134) and again closes the door behind the grill so that Faulson and the reformers who accompany her are "left facing wood" (134). In some cases, although the reformers' words reach the Poor Clares' ears, Jussie chooses not to record them in her written account. Of Farel's preaching in April 1534, she remarks, "He spoke some shameful words that I will not write, because it is horrible for a chaste heart to think of them" (100), and of Faulson's the following year, she says "she spoke words about the Holy Sacrament that I would be horrified to write, words that were deceitful and completely the opposite of salvation" (133). When Claudine Levet, another Reformed Genevan woman, comes to the convent and denounces the cult of

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the saints and the state of virginity, Jussie notes simply that she "said other things that out of decency I will not repeat" (159). Although the Poor Clares are not always successful in controlling the messages they receive, Jussie blocks the transmission of these messages to future generations.

Reformers do not always manage to speak to the Poor Clares, but they are ultimately able to deprive the nuns of the sounds they most want to hear: bells, as mentioned above, and, even more importantly, liturgies and Masses. Early in her chronicle, describing her convent's exceptionality during the occupation of Geneva in October 1530 by troops from Bern and Fribourg, Jussie writes that "there was no Mass or divine service, high or low, observed while those false heretical Swiss were there, except in the convent of Madame Saint Clare, whose church was closed to no one" (48). From the beginning, the Convent of St. Clare stands as a lone outpost of traditional belief and practice in Geneva. During the Poor Clares' last weeks in the city, Jussie writes similarly that "From that day [9 August 1535] on no service was celebrated in the whole town, except at the Convent of Saint Clare, where the poor sisters still observed the canonical hours, but with the doors closed" (138). By contrast, less than three weeks later, on 28 August 1535, after the convent has been breached by reformers and is under the protection of armed guards, she reports that city officials tell the nuns, "Now listen here, fine ladies, you are very blind not to recognize the truth of the Gospel, and you are stubborn to live in your errors. But I ask you, on behalf of messieurs and city, not to say any more offices, high or low. You will hear no more masses in the city or be secluded here any longer. So decide what you want to do" (164). This firm prohibition on offices and Masses makes the Poor Clares' departure from Geneva both necessary and urgent. The women's need for safety means both an unbroken physical space and an acoustic environment that is under their own control. It is this environment that they seek to recreate in Annecy.

5 Restoration of the Traditional Soundscape

A week after their departure from Geneva, bells accompany the Poor Clares as they arrive in Annecy, the city that will be their new home, a scene Jussie describes as a celebration of both sight and sound. Of the last stage of their arduous journey, she writes that "the road from Annecy to Cran was full of people, without a break, carrying lights, torches, and lanterns, and all the bells rang out melodiously" (181). The Poor Clares' triumph over their adversaries in Geneva and resumption of their chosen way of life in Annecy is marked by a restoration of the traditional soundscape. After hearing Mass at the Franciscan

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monastery in Annecy on 6 September 1535, the women go immediately to the empty Augustinian monastery that will become their convent. At the monastery, Jussie writes, "They went straight to the church, where they prostrated themselves in the middle of the choir and, with a fine voice, recited the 'Salve regina' aloud and other words of praise, giving thanks to God, who had allowed them to reach this safe place" (184). Jussie notes explicitly that the nuns' prayers are not silent ones but are uttered aloud. That evening, the Poor Clares visit the Dominican monastery, where they hear vespers and offer prayers over tombs, and the church of Notre Dame de Liesse, where they hail an image of the Virgin Mary and a stillborn child comes to life and is baptized. Of this event, Jussie remarks, "all the bells were rung for that miracle" (185). They then say prayers over the tomb of Count Philippe of Savoy and, finally, return to their new convent, never to leave it again. At midnight, they say matins in their own church. Jussie notes with satisfaction that "the Divine Office has been said in the convent day and night ever since then, until today, in all piety and reverence" (185). Order, and proper sound, have been restored. Free from devilish sermons, howling, lamentations, and indecent songs, and no longer compelled to listen to attempts to convert them, the Poor Clares may at last return to an environment of bells and prayers.

6 Conclusion

Jussie states explicitly that her objective in composing her chronicle is to strengthen and inspire those who face challenges in years to come. She wishes to preserve a record of the Poor Clares' experiences "so that in the future those who suffer for the love of God in the world will know that our ancestors suffered as much as we do, and as people after us will, and always, to varying degrees, in the example of Our Lord and Redeemer, who suffered the first and the most" (90). She wrote for listeners rather than for readers, surely intending her work to be read aloud for the edification of future nuns in the Convent of St. Clare, probably at mealtimes.[33] Her account of the Reformation was not published until the early seventeenth century.[34] Two inscriptions added to the

33 Feld, *Petite chronique*, xxv.

34 Jeanne de Jussie, *Le Levain du Calvinisme, ou commencement de l'heresie de Geneve. Faict par Reverende Soeur Jeanne de Jussie, lors religieuse de Sainte Claire de Geneve, & apres sa sortie Abbesse au Convent d'Anyssi* (Chambéry: Du Four, 1611). Albert Rilliet suggests that the publication in 1611 by the Catholic press of the Frères Du Four was aimed at encouraging Charles-Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, to attack Protestant Geneva. Albert Rilliet, "Notice sur Jeanne de Jussie et sur le livre intitulé Le Levain du Calvinisme," *Le*

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manuscript that is believed to be in Jussie's own hand attest to its value as a material object within the convent. These inscriptions state, "We must be very careful not to take this book out of the convent, but to take very special care of it and preserve it carefully for always," and "Take good care of this book and never take it out of the convent."[35] Readers today may be grateful for the fact that this manuscript did make it out of the convent before the Poor Clares' archives were burned during the French Revolution. Although Jussie may not have intended to publish her chronicle, she crafted a text with a strong sense of narrative and many fine literary qualities, including close attention to sensory aspects, especially sound, that convey "the strength of feeling in the original experience that is inherent in all violence," as Graves-Monroe puts it, and stand as an "effort to preserve the memory of that heightened experience and thus recreate a vivid stylized version of it for the reader's [or listener's] edification."[36] Jussie's compelling account of the early Reformation in Geneva speaks across the centuries as she relates the life-changing events experienced by a group of women who had dedicated themselves to God and to the church long before John Calvin set foot in their city.

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35 Translations are the author's. The original French inscriptions read, "Il faut bien se garder de ne jamais sortir ce livre du Convent, mais en avoir un soin tres particulier et le bien conserver pour Tousiour," and "Gardés bien ce livre, et ne le sortés jamais du convent." The manuscript is item Ms. Suppl. 1453 at the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire in Geneva.

36 Graves-Monroe, "Soundscapes," 57.

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CHAPTER 7

Calvin, Farel, Roussel, and the French "Nicodemites"

Michael W. Bruening

On 13 April 1563, the Roman Inquisition summoned eight French bishops to Rome on suspicion of Calvinism.[1] Given Calvin's position against Nicodemism, this does not seem to make any sense. "Calvinist French bishop" seems to be a contradiction in terms. The date is striking as well; by 1563, the French Reformed Church was an established institution. It met at annual synods and had its own confession of faith, which was thoroughly Calvinist and left no room for bishops. At least for some of the eight bishops, however, the charge of Calvinism – or at least of Protestantism – was not altogether without merit. Louis d'Albret, bishop of Lescar, was the nephew of the powerful, Protestant Queen of Navarre, Jeanne d'Albret, and one of Queen Jeanne's most important advisors. He was accused of permitting the removal of images from the churches, the destruction of altars and baptismal fonts, and the prohibition of the Catholic Mass.[2] He did not deny the charges, but this did not prevent him from remaining in his position as bishop in the French Church. Another bishop, Jean de Monluc, bishop of Valence, had been accused by the Paris Faculty of Theology of rejecting purgatory, giving wine to the laity during communion,

1 Antoine Degert, "Procès de huit évêques français suspects de calvinisme," *Revue des questions historiques*, n.s. 32 (July 1904): 61–108. The eight were Jean de Chaumont (or de Saint-Romain), archbishop of Aix; Jean de Monluc, bishop of Valence; François de Noailles, bishop of Dax; Antoine Caracciolo, bishop of Troyes; Louis d'Albret, bishop of Lescar; Claude Régin, bishop of Oloron; Charles Guillart, bishop of Chartres; and Jean de Saint-Gelais, bishop of Uzès.

2 "… mais enfin j'ay esté constraint de me laisser persuader, et tenir pour vray, qu'en vostre presence et de vostre consentement, les images de l'église de Lescar avoyent esté ostées de dessus les autels, les croix et fons baptismaux rompus, les ornemens et réliquaires aliénez, les chanoines chassez et interdits d'y server Dieu selon la forme de l'église catholique, pour y introduire les hérétiques, et y permettre les predications des erreurs abominables, que le diable fait sémer aujourd'huy par le moyen de ses ministres." *Mémoires de Condé, servant d'éclaircissement et de preuves à l'histoire de M. de Thou, contenant ce qu'il s'est passé de plus memorable en Europe*, 6 vols. ([The Hague?], 1743), 4:628, Cardinal d'Armaignac to the Bishop of Lescar, 18 August 1563. See also d'Albret's response, in which he did not deny the charge: "… car à quoy servant les images, je vous prie, sinon à destourner les hommes de l'honneur qu'ils doivent à Dieu, et décevoir les simples, en leur faisant accroire ce qui n'est pas?" *Ibid.*, 632, Discourse of the Bishop of Lescar on the letters to him from the Cardinal d'Armaignac.

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and supporting the doctrine of *sola fide*.[3] And Antonio Caracciolo, bishop of Troyes, several times openly professed adherence to the Reformed faith and gained the support of Peter Martyr Vermigli, Theodore Beza, and the consistory of Troyes.

So how should one interpret these "Calvinist-Catholic bishops," especially in the context of Calvin's strong anti-Nicodemite stance? They were, after all, doing almost exactly what Calvin's first Nicodemite targets, Gérard Roussel and Nicolas Duchemin, had done: namely, claiming to adhere to the Reformed faith while holding a Catholic bishopric. Yet Calvin writes no excoriating letters denouncing these bishops as "neither Christians nor good men," as he had called Roussel.[4] Indeed, Calvin even offered support – tepid and much qualified support, to be sure – for Caracciolo to remain a bishop and join the evangelical congregation of Troyes at the same time.

I would like to suggest that the arguments both for and against Nicodemism, at least in the French Reformed context, stemmed in part from the larger strategic question of how best to reform France. Indeed, we need to go back even before Calvin to Guillaume Farel and his relationship with the members of Marguerite of Navarre's evangelical network to find the roots of the debate. For both Calvin and Farel, the best way to reform France was to "provoke to piety" (in Farel's words) those they saw as half-hearted in their adherence to the Gospel.[5] From the other side, the so-called "Nicodemites" believed that the best way to reform France was to work from within the system. It is important to note that to the Nicodemites "the system" was the *French* Church, not the "Roman" or "Papal" Church; many of them had little interest in the pope or the church of Rome. Calvin and Farel, by contrast, always identified the Catholic Church with the Papacy. Moreover, the case of the eight "Calvinist-Catholic" bishops shows that the Nicodemite position in France lasted longer than is usually acknowledged, with Catholic bishops seeking to reform their dioceses

3 "Conclusiones Sacra Facultatis quibus damnantur plures Libri D. de Monluc Episcopi de Valence qui in colloquio Bisciaco et passim dicebatur favere haeresi Calvinianorum de Purgatorio, de libertate per Christi gratiam sublata de Missae audiendae necessitate, praecipue poenitentibus, tempore ab Ecclesia praescripto et Calicis cuius usum Laïcis concedebat, novam ad hoc formam praescribens more Haereticorum, de iustitia imputativa et bonis operibus…." Charles du Plessis d'Argentré, *Collectio judiciorum de novis erroribus*, 3 vols. (Paris: André Cailleau, 1728), 2:296b.

4 "… de te, ut voles, aestimabas: mihi certe nec vir bonus eris, nec Christianus." Calvin, *Epistolae Duae*, OS 1:362.

5 "… unanimes sic disseminemus Verbum ad multorum salutem, ut barbara hac gente quod superest cultioris Galliae ad pietatem provocetur…." Aimé-Louis Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, 9 vols. (Geneva:1866–1897), 2:150, no. 244, Farel to Zwingli, Aigle, 23 July 1528.

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along evangelical lines well into the 1560s. Perhaps most surprising of all is that Calvin seems to have changed his mind, or at the very least softened his stance, when he recognized that reform-minded bishops could, in fact, be useful in advancing the Reformed cause in France.

Discussion of French Nicodemism usually starts in 1537 with the publication of Calvin's *Epistolae Duae*, written against two former friends, Gérard Roussel and Nicolas Duchemin, who had taken positions as bishops in France.[6] To understand Calvin's position, however, we must look back a decade earlier to another quarrel, also involving Roussel, to find the roots of the debate in the French context. In 1526, Roussel wrote to Guillaume Farel in Strasbourg to inform him of a job offer back in France in the noble household of the de la Marck family. Although the position was likely quite attractive, it came with a condition: Farel would have to tone down his polemic against the Eucharist and "be content to teach Christ and the true benefit of his work."[7] For Farel, this appears to have been totally unacceptable. Unfortunately, we do not have his reply; indeed, we have no further letters at all between him and Roussel. This total breakdown in communications, combined with his recent experience in Strasbourg in the thick of the Eucharistic controversy between Lutherans and Reformed, seems to suggest that Farel had begun to see the Reformed understanding of the Eucharist and the rejection of the Catholic Mass as *sine qua non* conditions for true reform. Back in France, his old friends did not see things the same way. Roussel, Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, and Marguerite of Navarre continued to work within the system. To Farel, by contrast, the evil of the Mass made working within the system untenable. A full break had to be

6 There is an extensive literature on Nicodemism and Calvin's opposition to it. Nevertheless, there is little disagreement over Calvin's fundamental position against religious dissimulation, and scholars often note that he left evangelicals living in Catholic countries just two options, flee or stay and risk persecution. See, e.g., Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), ch. 7; David F. Wright, "Why was Calvin so Severe a Critic of Nicodemism?" in *Calvinus Evangelii Propugnator: Calvin, Champion of the Gospel*, edited by David F. Wright et al., 66–90 (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 2006). While some scholars see changes in emphasis in Calvin's thought over time, most maintain that he never really changed his mind. This chapter suggests that he did, if only slightly, and it explores the critique against Nicodemism made by Farel and his circle before Calvin's *Epistolae Duae*, a topic rarely addressed in existing scholarship. An exception is Frans Pieter Van Stam, "The Group of Meaux as First Target of Farel and Calvin's Anti-Nicodemism," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 68, no. 2 (2006): 253–75.

7 "Sed quid optemus probe nosti, ne scilicet spargatur per quod demum suboriatur dissidium. Quantum mihi displiceat dissentio nuper orta, vix effari possum. Abstine, oro, ab ea, sed contentus esto docere Christum et verum usum operum illius." Herminjard 1:460, no. 184. Roussel to Farel, [St.-Germain en Laye], 7 December [1526].

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made, and Farel did so: from the Mass, from the Old Church, from France, and from his old friends there.

Farel did not break off all contact with France, but his new goal was to draw more refugee ministers to Switzerland. Indeed, I would argue that the polemical works produced in Neuchâtel in the early 1530s chiefly targeted French evangelicals, in an attempt to prod Farel's former colleagues to embrace the Gospel openly. In 1531, he complained to Zwingli, "We have called with numerous letters those pious and suitable for the work of God. But the delights of France have so held them captive that they prefer to perish without fruit and to be silent under tyranny than to profess Christ openly."[8] Farel continues in the letter to cite Pierre Toussain who "could never be drawn [to Switzerland], until he … [was] expelled from France."[9] These statements reveal two important things: First, Farel is highly critical of his former colleagues in France for refusing to "profess Christ openly." Second, he saw in his friend Toussain's example that perhaps the best way to draw ministers to Switzerland was to get them expelled from France.

Thus, the publishing program by Farel and his colleagues must be seen not just as – or even primarily as – a propaganda campaign to win over the people in the streets of Paris, but as a way to confront Gérard Roussel and the members of Marguerite's circle in France. To Farel, the vigorous confrontation over the Mass would either "provoke them to piety" or lead to more expulsions like Toussain's, which would force them to join Farel in Switzerland. And at least the second part worked. The crackdown following the Affair of the Placards did indeed lead several prominent French evangelicals to seek refuge in Switzerland, thereby swelling the ranks of ministers in the area. Thus, while the Placards were a catastrophe from the perspective of the national reform pursued by Marguerite's network, they had exactly the desired effect for Farel and his circle. Underground evangelicals were forced to the surface and came to the Suisse romande to profess the Gospel openly.

We can see clearly an early example of a specifically anti-Nicodemite position in one of these works published in Neuchâtel in the pre-Calvin period. In

8 "Vocavimus crebris literis pios et ad opus Dei non ineptos. Verum delitiae Gallicae ita detinent captivos, ut malint sine fructu perire, et mussitabundi latere sub tyrannis, quam palam Christum profiteri." Herminjard 2:356, no. 351, Farel to Zwingli, Orbe, [July or August] 1531.

9 "Quod expertus est frater pius qui isthic nunc agit, Petrus Toussanus, per Oecolampadium saepe huc vocatus literis, quibus nostras frequentes addidimus. Verum adduci nunquam potuit, donec e Galliis pulsus ad te se contulit." Herminjard 2:356, no. 351.

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1534, the pseudonymous author "Cephas Geranius"[10] wrote in the appendix to Antoine Marcourt's *Declaration de la Messe*,

> And above all, you scoundrel who completely understands the truth, how dare you procure, hold, and retain benefices … proceeding from this filthy, vile, and abominable source of Rome? … You know very well that in accepting bishoprics, abbeys, parishes, and canonries, you consent to all the abominations against God's honor that take place daily in those places. What excuse can you make before God and men, seeing as you know by the Word of God that these are nothing but abuses?[11]

And Farel himself alluded to his former colleagues in France in his concluding arguments at the 1536 Lausanne Disputation:

> … We must consider what edifies and can serve our neighbor.… And so those greatly sin who well know the abuse and abomination of the things established and ordained by the popes and all their estate.… They are found in their idolatries with head uncovered and knees bent before images at the masses and offices that the priests perform.… In their heart they detest and hold in abomination the estate and all that is of the papal church, and in brief, all that is not from the pure word of God as contrary to God.… One such preacher, who defended himself against the entire Sorbonne, chants the Mass and knows what he is doing.…[12]

10 "Cephas Geranius" has never been identified. Some have suggested Pierre Viret, others the Francophone Bernese secretary Peter Cyro.

11 "Et encore sur tout toy miserable qui as entiere intelligence de verite, comme ose tu procurer, prendre, et retenir les benefices que justement on debvroit nommer venefices procedans de ceste orde, villaine, et abominable source de Rome? Tu scais que ce sont biens de anathema plus horrible que celuy de Hierico, conquis. Tu ne ignore point en recevant Evesche, Abbaye, Cure, Chanoinerie, que tu consens a toutes les abominations qui se sont journellement esdictz lieux contre lhonneur de Dieu. Quelle excusation peulx tu pretendre devant dieu, et devant les hommes, veu que tu scais par la parolle de dieu que ce ne sont que abuz?" Antoine Marcourt and Cephas Geranius, *Declaration de la Messe, le fruict d'icelle, la cause et le moyen pourquoy et comment on la doibt maintenir* ([Neuchâtel]: [Pierre de Vingle], [1534], F3r–F3v.

12 "… fault que nous regardions ce que edifie et peult servir à nostre prochain … En quoy grandement pechent et faillent ceux qui bien sçavent l'abus et l'abomination des choses constituees et ordonnees par les papes et tout son estat … ilz se trouvent en leurs idolatries la teste descouverte et les genoux ployez devant les imaiges, aux messes et offices que les prestres font … mais, mesme en leur cueur, ilz detestent et ont en abomination l'estat et tout ce qui est de l'eglise papale, et, en somme, de tout ce qui n'est par la pure parolle comme chose contraire à Dieu … puis que ung tel prescheur, qui a mainctenu

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Farel moves from a general denunciation of anyone who knows the truth but refuses to act accordingly to a single person. It seems that he is referring specifically here to his old friend Gérard Roussel, who had accepted the bishopric of Oloron in February 1536.[13] Farel continues to lambast Roussel: "Demolisher and destroyer of people, you serve the devil. You dishonor God, neither loving nor serving him, since you do not love your neighbor, whom you abandon and destroy, confounded and given to perdition."[14] Roussel's acceptance of the bishopric of Oloron completed the split between Marguerite's network and Farel's associates in the Suisse romande. Farel's anti-Nicodemism had preceded even this event but was vigorously reinforced by it. Calvin would soon go after Roussel as well, but he did not create the anti-Nicodemite argument; he stole it from Farel and his colleagues.

It is, of course, notoriously difficult to find the arguments from the other side, that is, from the "Nicodemites" themselves, for they did not want to betray their unorthodox beliefs publicly while in France. Thus, we do not have published answers to the anti-Nicodemite critiques by Farel and Calvin. Perhaps the best-known reply is that of Antoine Fumée, who wrote privately to Calvin,

> A number of people think your assertions are thoroughly wretched. They accuse you of being merciless and very severe to those who are afflicted, and they say that it is easy for you to preach and threaten over there, but that if you were here you would perhaps feel differently.[15]

This seems to have been one of the main lines of attack against Calvin: It is well and good for him to try to direct matters from the safety of Geneva, but it is a

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son dire contre toute la Sorbonne, chante messe, il sçait bien qu'il faict…." Arthur Piaget, ed., *Les actes de la Dispute de Lausanne 1536, publiés intégralement d'après le manuscrit de Berne*, Mémoires de l'Université de Neuchâtel 6 (Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l'Université, 1928), 396f.

13 Van Stam, "The Group of Meaux," 257–62.

14 "Ainsy le povre frere et le povre peuple perit à cause de toy, en ce que tu fays, et Dieu demandera son ame et son sang de ta main…. Ruyneur et destructeur de peuple, tu sers au diable. Tu deshonorez Dieu, ne l'aymant et ne luy servant, puis que tu n'aymes ton prochain, lequel tu perdz et destruictz, confondz et meines à perdition." Piaget, ed., *Les actes de la Dispute de Lausanne*, 397.

15 "De quo quid nostrorum magna pars sentiat, deinde ego quoque dicam: putant plerique miserrimum id esse quod praedicas. Te inclementem ac durissimum afflictis esse conqueruntur: hoc te illic facile et praedicare et monere posse, qui si hic sis aliter forte sentires." CO 11: col.646, no. 516, late 1543. English translation from Jean Calvin, *Three French Treatises*, ed. Francis M. Higman, Athlone Renaissance Library (London: Athlone Press, 1970), 25, n. 3.

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very different situation for those who are actually in France and being affected by the situation there.

The main position of Roussel and his companions in Marguerite's circle, therefore, has to be deduced simply from the actions and history of this group. From the very beginning of the French reform movement in Meaux, their strategy had been to reform the church from within, starting at the diocesan level and hopefully working up to a national reform sponsored by the king. The Meaux circle set the stage, with Guillaume Briçonnet a sympathetic bishop and support from the royal family in the king's sister, Marguerite of Navarre. Even after Briçonnet returned to Catholic orthodoxy, Marguerite's unflagging support made the prospect of a complete break from France seem counterproductive to her associates. To be sure, the evangelicals' situation in France had its ups and downs, but Francis I's later crackdowns make it easy to forget the many positive swells of early royal support. The king intervened repeatedly in the 1520s to get the Sorbonne to back down from prosecuting Lefèvre and Roussel. Francis was always a supporter of humanistic learning over hardline religious orthodoxy, and the French humanists decidedly leaned toward the evangelical side. Perhaps most significantly, in 1533, just before the Nicolas Cop speech and then the Affair of the Placards, French evangelicals were having great success. Roussel preached the Lenten sermons to huge crowds at the Louvre, and Francis exiled Noël Beda and others who had been critical of him. This was long after Farel had given up hope on his former friends, but the tide in France had clearly shifted in the evangelicals' favor. It was effectively the rash action of the Placards Affair that stopped the momentum.

Despite the crackdown after the Placards, Marguerite was able to continue to support and protect some of her favorites, including Roussel. We need to bear in mind that for Roussel to have abandoned her for Switzerland would have been the height of disloyalty. She had protected him for years and kept him as her personal preacher and almoner. Nor had the members of her network given up hope on reforming France. They simply reverted to the same strategy they had used at the start: diocesan reform. When Roussel accepted the bishopric of Oloron, he did so not because he repented of his former flirtation with Protestantism. On the contrary, the evidence suggests he used his new position to continue the work started in Meaux. We are fortunate to have a guide on episcopal visitations that Roussel wrote, the *Forme de Visite de Diocèse*.[16] In it, Roussel stresses the importance of preaching. But Roussel wanted not only to

16 *Forme de visite de diocese*, transcription in Paul J. Landa, "The Reformed Theology of Gérard Roussel, Bishop of Oloron (1536–1555)" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1976), 600–10; also in C. Schmidt, *Gérard Roussel, Prédicateur de la Reine Marguerite de Navarre:*

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ensure *that* the priests in his diocese were preaching to the people, but also to inform *what* they were preaching. He insisted that "no other word should be preached and announced than the pure word of God, the Gospel which Jesus Christ commanded to be preached to every creature."[17] Roussel emphasizes that "belief must precede deed, faith precede work, such that work cannot be good if it is not done in faith."[18] Here he clearly echoes Luther in *The Freedom of a Christian*.[19] Roussel continues in very Lutheran terms:

> The justice of faith is called the justice of God, not that it is the justice by which God himself is just, but in which God freely clothes the sinner, when he pardons his sins and receives him in his grace, which properly can be called the justice of Jesus Christ. He is the author of it, and it is his, but it is attributed and imputed [*approprier*] to us by the faith which receives it from him and grants it to us.... We must say that the obedience of Jesus Christ, who is true and perfect justice ... is communicated, attributed, and imputed to us and made ours by grace, in such a way that by grace we are made participants and beneficiaries of the fruit and merits.[20]

Mémoire servant à l'histoire des premières tentatives faites pour introduire la Réformation en France (Strasbourg: Schmidt & Grucker, also Paris and Geneva, 1845), 226–39.

17 "Quant à la doctrine et parolle qui doibt estre annuncée au peuple assemblé, nous doibt estre persuadé du tout notoire, que aultre parolle ne doibt estre preschée et annuncée que la pure parolle de Dieu, l'evangille que Jesuchrist a commandé estre presché à toute creature." Schmidt, *Gérard Roussel*, 227.

18 "Croire doibt proceder faire, la foy proceder l'oeuvre, de sorte que l'oeuvre ne peult estre bon s'il n'est faict en foy." Schmidt, *Gérard Roussel*, 227.

19 For example, Luther wrote: "The following statements are therefore true: 'Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works.' Consequently it is always necessary that the substance or person himself be good before there can be any good works, and that good works follow and proceed from the good person, as Christ says, 'A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit' [Matt. 7:18]." LW 31:361.

20 "La justice de foy est appellé la justice de Dieu; non point, dict sainct Augustin, que soit la justice de laquelle Dieu est juste en soy, mais de laquelle Dieu vest gratuitement le pecheur, quant il luy pardonne ses pechez et le recoipt en sa grace, laquelle proprement peult estre appellée la justice de Jesuchrist, pource qu'il est l'autheur d'icelle, et est la sienne, mais nous est attribuée et appropriée par la foy qui nous l'impetre et la recoipt de luy ... ainsi debvons nous dire que l'obeissance de Jesuchrist qui est vraye et parfaicte justice ... nous est communiquée, attribuée, imputée, et faicte nostre par grace, de sorte que par grace sommes faictz participans et joyssans du fruict et merite." Schmidt, *Gérard Roussel*, 227–29.

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As further explanation of his views, Roussel wrote a much longer treatise entitled *Familiere exposition du symbole, de la loy, et oraison dominicale.*[21] As his biographer concludes, "Apart from some slight concessions made to the exterior forms of Catholicism … it is a book that could have come from the pen of a reformer."[22] Roussel argues that the foundation of Christian doctrine is justification by faith alone, that Scripture is the only valid Christian authority, that Jesus is the sole head of the church, that Peter has no superior authority, that the church properly defined is not the ecclesiastical hierarchy but the invisible communion of the saints, and the marks of the visible church are the preaching of the Gospel and the proper administration of the *two* sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist.[23] Moreover, Roussel's doctrine of the Eucharist was decidedly influenced by Calvin's thought.[24] Thus, this "Catholic bishop" so derided by Calvin was doing nothing other than trying to instill evangelical doctrine in his diocese, for he continued to believe that the best way to spread the Gospel was not through contentious debate or rash abandonment of France, but through continued work within the existing system. It is interesting to note that the word "Rome" does not appear once in these works of Roussel. To call him a "papist" or "Romanist," therefore, is to distort completely his theological position. Roussel wanted to reform the French Church from within. He had not the slightest interest in Rome or the pope.

Roussel's experience shows that we must adjust our understanding of Nicodemism. The Nicodemites are almost always associated with fear and weakness: Fear of persecution, fear of exile, weak faith, and weak consciences. No doubt for some French evangelicals this was the case. But at least for Roussel, and likely for many others who chose to remain in France, fear and weakness had nothing to do with their decision. Roussel did not accept the bishopric of Oloron because he was greedy for money or fearful of persecution; he did it because he saw it as the best way to reform at least one corner of France. And under Marguerite's daughter, her brother-in-law bishop of Lescar, and Roussel's successor bishop in Oloron, that corner of present-day France (namely, Béarn) would become the most successful French-speaking Reformed state outside of Switzerland.

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21 Schmidt provides a relatively lengthy summary of the text in *Gérard Roussel*, 129–55, and Landa based much of his dissertation, "The Reformed Theology of Gerard Roussel" on the text, esp. 63–261.

22 Schmidt, *Gérard Roussel*, 153.

23 Schmidt, *Gérard Roussel*, 153.

24 Schmidt, *Gérard Roussel*, 160; Jonathan Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols., Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 536–45.

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The experience in Navarre seems to have shown Calvin's circle that the Nicodemites may have had a point all along. Particularly interesting is Jean Raymond Merlin's report to Calvin on his initial efforts at assisting Jeanne d'Albret with the Reformation of her territories. One of his most important pieces of advice was to let the priests keep their benefices.[25] He explains:

> I hear that the priests and gentlemen and other relatives and friends of the priests are ready to band together in sedition if their benefices are taken away.... I know very well that many will say that one must compel the priests to give up all or a part of their benefices. But if they were here and understood well the danger, they would speak differently.[26]

This is, of course, similar to Fumée's complaint several years earlier, but there are two key differences: First, this was written by one of Calvin's friends and colleagues, not by a potentially suspect *parlementaire*. Second, and more crucially, the danger described here is not of persecution of individual evangelicals, but of a failed territorial reformation. Merlin concludes that the strategy for bringing reform to France depended on allowing Catholic priests to continue to enjoy their benefices.

Calvin himself seems to have come around on this already. In 1561, Beza sought Calvin's advice on Antonio Caracciolo, the bishop of Troyes, who wanted to keep his bishopric and join the evangelical community in the city.[27] While Calvin did not address Caracciolo specifically, he did write a general piece of advice entitled *Pour les évesques et curez de la papaulté*.[28] Calvin insists that a bishop like Caracciolo must openly profess his faith, stop saying Mass, and preach the true Word of God. But then he concludes,

> A bishop would have to try his hardest to purge the churches under his care of all idolatries and errors, showing the way to all the priests of his

25 "Premierement quant aux ecclesiastiques qu'elle taschast de les gaigner, leur promettant qu'elle les laisseroit jouir des revenus de leurs benefices et qu'elle leur feroit des autres biens, moyenant qu'ils s'accordassent à la reformation de la religion." CO 20: col. 89, no. 3988, Merlin to Calvin, Pau, 23 July 1563.

26 "Epuis j'entendis que les prestres et les gentilhommes et autres parens et amis des prestres, estoyent tous prests de se bander et esmouvoir sedition, si on leur ostoit leurs benefices.... Je sçay bien que plusieurs diront qu'il falloit contraindre les prestres à quitter ou tout ou une partie de leurs benefices. Mais s'ils eussent esté icy et qu'ils eussent bien consideré le danger ils eussent parlé autrement." CO 20: col. 90–91, no 3988.

27 On this case, see Loretta T. Johnson Burns, "The Politics of Conversion: John Calvin and the Bishop of Troyes," *SCJ* 25, no. 4 (1994): 809–22.

28 CO 10: col. 184–87.

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> diocese and leading them to obey the Reformation to which the Word of God leads us and which conforms to the practice of the primitive Church.... Regarding the temporal goods, whether in jurisdiction or revenue, although this corruption is incompatible with the pure simplicity of the spiritual system of the Church, nevertheless while things remain confused, one can out of tolerance allow them to keep them, as long as one exhorts them to distribute the goods in their hands as having been dedicated to God, not only in order to avoid profaning sacred things but also to maintain the modesty appropriate to true bishops.[29]

This is indeed a qualified response from Calvin, but it still seems to have been a significant departure from his vicious condemnation of Roussel in the *Epistolae duae* twenty-four years earlier. Calvin had in essence accepted the possibility that a Catholic bishop could keep his title and benefice and join the Reformed community. The key phrase in the text above seems to be "while things remain confused." Here, Calvin is referring to the complicated situation in France in 1561, with unprecedented gains being made by the Reformed there. But perhaps confusion plagued Calvin's thoughts as well. His former world view, framed so vividly in black and white, good and evil, right and wrong, was being challenged by the situation on the ground in France: by Catholic priests and bishops moving towards the Reformed faith but unable to make a complete break, by evangelical communities with no called pastor but perhaps a local priest sympathetic to their cause, by noblemen and women, like Jeanne d'Albret, who could institute real religious change in the realm but without completely abolishing the Mass in their lands. Perhaps it was the realization that reform of France could come, but it would not happen all at once. And for it to come, he might have to adjust, at least a little bit, his long-standing view on Nicodemism.

29 "Cela presupposé, il faudra qu'un Evesque tasche tant qu'il pourra de purger les Eglises qui sont sous sa charge et superintendence de toutes idolatries et erreurs, monstrant le chemin à tous Curez de son Diocese, et les induisant à obeir à la reformation à laquele la Parole de Dieu nous convie et laquele est conforme à l'estat et prattique de l'Eglise primitive ... Touchant du bien temporel, soit en jurisdiction ou revenu, combien que c'est une corruption incompatible avec la pure simplicité du regime spirituel de l'Eglise, toutesfois durant que les choses demeurent confuses on pourra bien par tolerance leur en laisser la possession, moyennant qu'on les exhorte de distribuer le bien qu'ils ont entre mains, comme estant dedié à Dieu, tant pour ne point profaner les choses sacrees qu'aussi pour se tenir en modestie convenable à vrays Evesques." CO 10: col. 186.

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CHAPTER 8

'Those Satanic Anabaptists': Calvin, Soul Sleep, and the Search for an Anabaptist Nemesis

Brian C. Brewer

That John Calvin did not favor the Anabaptists is evident to any cursory reading of his works. From several treatises, three of which were devoted to his perception of the theology of their radical movement,[1] to multiple references and colorful flourishes through his various editions of the *Institutes*, Calvin appears to have hardly published a single positive word about them. His often pejorative rhetoric about the group at times even rivaled the visceral language regularly used by Martin Luther against his own detractors. Yet, this essay will argue two paradoxical ideas: First, that John Calvin, through all of his writings, did not always demonstrate a precise knowledge of what exactly the Anabaptists actually believed and, second, that Calvin was, at the same time, both theologically and personally shaped by the Anabaptists in fashions he never publicly admitted and in ways which profoundly molded the foundations of what we know today as Reformed Christianity. These twin propositions are not only demonstrable, they also served a combined purpose for a compelling motive for his theological writing and resolve for his ministry.

1 Calvin's First Attack: *Psychopannychia* (the Sleep of the Soul)

The first record where John Calvin addressed the theology of the Anabaptists, was, tellingly, in his very first theological writing, *Psychopannychia*, a work he significantly revised over the years of his ministry in Geneva and Strasbourg. The treatise was first composed in 1534 at Orléans when he was just twenty-five years old, but was only published with a second preface in Basel in 1542.[2] As

1 Along with his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin also would write a 1544 treatise, *Brief Instruction for Arming All the Good Faithful Against the Errors of the Common Sect of the Anabaptists*, a general critique of the Anabaptists, and a 1558 treatise, *Contra Mennonem*, a refutation of Menno Simons' position on the Incarnation.

2 The first edition did not have 'Psychopannychia' in the title: John Calvin, *Vivere apud Christum non dormire animis sanctos, qui in fide Christi decedent* (Strasbourg: Wendelin Rihel, 1542). The 1545 edition was the first to have the title by which it is now commonly cited,

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Williston Walker observed, "the year in which Calvin wrote was one of widespread dread, in more conservative circles, of the rapidly growing Anabaptist movement which was just coming to its most fanatical manifestation in the establishment of what was proclaimed to be the kingdom of God on earth at Münster."[3] For his part, Calvin attacked what he viewed as the imaginary sleep of the soul as an idea foreign to traditional and biblical Christian eschatology. Calvin posited that this idea originated in Arabic thought, was deemed heretical in centuries past, but was reintroduced into Christian circles in his day by the wild fanaticism of the Anabaptists.[4] Of greatest theological concern here to Calvin was the implication that the soul of the human was mortal and died or slept alongside the body. Thus, instead of residing with the body in death awaiting the resurrection to come, Calvin postulated that the soul was, as the Scriptures note, "with Christ."[5] He argued the necessity of the soul's immortality and post-mortem activity. He asserted,

> the spirit or soul of man is a substance distinct from the body … [;] the soul, after the death of the body, still survives, endued with sense and intellect. And it is a mistake to suppose that I am here affirming anything else than the immortality of the soul…. Let us now learn this immortality from Scripture. When Christ exhorts his followers not to fear those who can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul, but to fear him who, after he hath killed the body, is able to cast the soul into Gehenna (Mt 10:28), does he not intimate that the soul survives death?[6]

Calvin then, assuming the doctrine of Christ's descent into Hell, rhetorically asked the Anabaptists about Jesus' own death: "Did He sleep when he was working for your salvation?"[7] Citing Revelation 6:10–11, he mockingly posed to his radical nemeses:

Psychopannychia, qua refellitur quorundam imperitorum error, qui animas post mortem usque ad ultimum judicium dormire putant (Strasbourg: Wendelin Rihel, 1545). A critical edition may be found in CO 5: col. 162–232.

3 Williston Walker, *John Calvin* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), 124.

4 John Calvin, "Psychopannychia," here cited in Henry Beveridge, trans., *Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1851; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 415 [hereafter "Psychopannychia,"]; CO 5: col. 171–172.

5 See, e.g., Luke 23:43; John 17:24; Acts 7:55–56, 59; Phil. 1:23; and 1 Thess. 5:10.

6 Calvin, "Psychopannychia," 427; CO 5: col. 183.

7 Calvin, "Psychopannychia," 436; CO 5: col. 191.

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> The souls of the dead cry aloud, and white robes are given unto them! O sleeping spirits! What are white robes to you? Are they pillows on which you are to lie down and sleep? You see that white robes are not at all adapted for sleep, and therefore, when thus clothed, they must be awake. If this is true, these white robes undoubtedly designate the commencement of glory, which the Divine liberality bestows upon martyrs while waiting for the day of judgement.[8]

For Calvin, the state of the soul following one's earthly life was clearly a central issue regarding Christian orthodoxy in his early public theological development, and the Anabaptists served as a particular challenge to preserving Christian unity and for upholding what he viewed as the proper understanding of the nature of the human soul as essential doctrine.

Yet, while the theory of soul sleep, he recounted, was snuffed out in early Christianity and "lay smoldering for some ages," Calvin claimed in his 1534 preface to the work that it "lately [has] begun to send forth sparks, being stirred up by some dregs of Anabaptists."[9] Calvin implied that unfortunately their heretical notions had now spread like wildfire, writing: "These babblers have so actively exerted themselves, that they have already drawn thousands into their insanity.... They are said to circulate their follies in a kind of Tracts, which I have never happened to see. I have only received some notes from a friend, who had taken down what he had cursorily heard from their lips, or collected by some other means."[10] Although admitting to building his entire argument based upon second hand information, Calvin constructed his first theological treatise against this perceived heretical Anabaptist intrusion into Christian orthodoxy.

But to make sure the reader did not miss where he directed his accusing finger regarding the Christian origin of this alleged theological invention, Calvin again repeated his indictment in his 1536 preface, writing now in Basel, "I am referring to the nefarious herd of Anabaptists," he said, "from whose fountain this noxious stream did, as I observed, first flow, and against whom nothing I have said equals their deserts."[11]

It is fair to say that Calvin articulated a strong defense of the soul's immortality against the Anabaptists in his first theological treatise. However, there is one particular problem regarding Calvin's argumentation: There is no hard

8 Calvin, "Psychopannychia," 445–446; CO 5: col. 198.
9 Calvin, "Psychopannychia," 415; CO 5: col. 171–172.
10 Calvin, "Pscyhopannychia," 414; CO 5: col. 169–170.
11 Calvin, "Psychopannychia," 416; CO 5: col. 173–174.

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historical evidence that most Anabaptists, as we now understand them, held to the view of soul sleep. Although a handful of scholars from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries have attempted to defend Calvin's accusations by presenting unsubstantiated evidence to the contrary (arguing that certain groups of Anabaptists did hold to the sleep of the soul and Calvin was keenly aware of and intentionally addressed these groups), most historians today see such claims as generally untrustworthy.[12]

If one were to review the writings of the more noted Anabaptist theologians at the time, particularly Conrad Grebel, Pilgram Marpeck, and Menno Simons, none, in his extant works, makes any mention of the state of the soul. Instead, as expected, these Anabaptists were busy polemically addressing their detractors regarding baptism, ecclesiology, and the role of the state in religious practices – in order to defend themselves against intense persecution. Dirk Philips appears to have recorded only one literary flourish in a private letter, referencing Rev. 5:9, that holy souls "lie under the altar" of the Lord awaiting other righteous souls to join them – hardly enough fodder for which to accuse him of psychopannychia.[13] For his part, Balthasar Hubmaier argued for the immortality of the soul of the Christian.[14] Likewise, there is little to no evidence

12 For instance, with no cited sources, Karl Müller in 1923 claimed that French Anabaptists propagated the notion of soul sleep. See his *Kirchengeschichte*, II, no. 2 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1923), 113; here via Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 32.

13 Dirk Philips, "No. 1 Epistle to the Wife of I. the S. Who Lay Imprisoned at Antwerp," *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, vol. 10, De geschriften van Dirk Philipsz, ed. F. Pijper (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1914), 675f; here via Philips, *The Writings of Dirk Philips, 1504–1568*, ed. Cornelius J. Dyck, William E. Keeney, and Alvin J. Beachy (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), 623.

14 Hubmaier held to a trichotomous view of Christian anthropology in which the human is comprised of a body, a spirit and a soul: "Der mensch ist ein leibliche vnd vernünfftige Creatur, also an leib, geyst vnd seel von Gott gemachet … dise drey sonderlich vnd wesenlich Substantzien Seel, Geist vnnd in einem yedlichenn menschen nach der bildung der heiligen dreyainikait gemacht vnd verainigt," in Hubmaier, *Von der Freiheit des Willens*, here via *Balthasar Hubmaier Schriften*, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer* [hereafter QGT] IX, ed. Gunnar Westin und Torsten Bergsten (Heidelberg, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1962), 382–83; Hubmaier, *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism,* ed. and trans. H. Wayne Pipkin and John H. Yoder (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 429–30. Although it is important to concede that the context of this anthropological development in Hubmaier's theology pertained to his arguments regarding free will and moral responsibility and not to death and the afterlife, his development of the soul does seem to have implications for the latter topics. Hubmaier argued that, after the fall of humanity, the flesh remained corrupt, the spirit was willing to do good, but the soul was "traurig vnd bekümert" ("sad and troubled"); QGT IX: 390; Pipkin and Yoder, 439). The soul then serves as the exercise of the will to assent to or reject good and evil.

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that Anabaptists who had made their way into France and into Basel held to a doctrine of soul sleep. As Christian Neff observed, "The fact is, there is no convincing evidence that such a belief was held by the Anabaptists or Mennonites anywhere,"[15] and Willem Balke noted, "The heretics whom Calvin attacked in *Psychopannychia* were not, in a true sense, Anabaptists."[16]

To be clear, Neff's and Balke's defense of Anabaptists on this issue is generally correct, but they somewhat overstate the case. A careful review of Anabaptist sources does show that the Austrian Anabaptist Leonhard Schiemer apparently did believe in soul sleep, one time arguing in passing in 1527 that the process of Christian perfection happens as "God brings about [ontological bodily change] through that sleep which all the saints share until the resurrection of Christ."[17] Likewise, Gerhard Westerburg, a German jurist, Andreas Karlstadt's brother-in-law and a one-time Anabaptist leader in Cologne (who ironically later became a reformed preacher) authored a booklet, entitled *De Purgatorio et Animarum,* in which he alluded to sleeping souls, a concept that Zwingli had attacked.[18] Nevertheless, these exceptions prove the rule: the vast majority of

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Hubmaier continued: "Die weil nun die Seel steet zwischen dem Geist vnd dem fleisch, wie Adam zwischen Gott, der im sagt, er solt von dem holtze der erkantnus des gůttens vnd bösens nit essen, vnd zwischen seiner Heua, die im sagt, er sollvon dem holtz essen. Yetz ist die Seel frey vnd mag dem Geyst oder fleisch volgen." Hubmaier, "Von der Freiheit des Willens," QGT IX, 391; Pipkin and Yoder, 440. Thus, if the soul chooses the ways of the flesh, it joins in the body's death. If the soul acquiesces to the spirit, it is united in the spirit's immortality and, following the resurrection, receives a new body. True Christians then experience their redeemed souls tethered to their innately immortal spirits. While significantly different from Calvin's eschatology in many respects, Hubmaier nevertheless demonstrates no development of psychopannychia in his theology. For further development, see Terry G. Hiebert, "Is the Search for the Anabaptist Soul a Dead End? Historic Anabaptism Meets Nancey Murphy's Nonreductive Physicalism," in *Direction: A Mennonite Brethren Forum* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 185–200.

15 Christian Neff, "Sleep of the Soul," in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, IV (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1959), 543.

16 Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, 31.

17 Leonhard Schiemer, "Letter to the Church at Rattenberg," 1527, in *Glaubenszeugnisse oberdeutscher Taufgesinnter*, vol. I, ed. Lydia Müller (Leipzig: M. Heinsius Nachfolger, 1938), 65–67; here via Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981), 55.

18 In his Latin pamphlet, Westerburg makes reference to those in the post-mortem state as "dormierunt," and he occasionally made use of the word *Seelenschlaf* in his more popular and expanded German version of this pamphlet. See Gerhard Westerburg, *De Purgatorio et Animarum statu doctoris, Gerhardi Vuestererburgij Coloniensis sententia ex sacris litteris Collecta* (Strassburg: Johann Schott, 1523), Aiv; and *Uom Fegefewer vnnd standt verscheyde selen eyn Chrystliche meynung durch Doctor Gerhart Westerburch von Coellen Neulich außigange* (Strassburg: Johann Schott, 1523). As with his own contemporaries, modern scholars debate whether Westerburg actually affirmed the sleep of the soul. For

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Anabaptists did not, in fact, hold to or at least develop a doctrine of soul sleep, and its first generation of theologians undoubtedly did not have the leisure of time, in the face of persecution for being charged with rebaptism and sedition, to address such issues unrelated to their basic identity.[19] Williston Walker perhaps was more accurately nuanced then regarding their association with this doctrine in stating that "the view which [Calvin] combated … had neither the prominence among them, the significance in itself, nor the large number of adherents that he ascribes to it."[20]

Additionally, the Anabaptists were most certainly not the originators of the notion of soul sleep in the sixteenth century. Balke instead suggests that a theory of soul sleep more likely derived not from Arabia, as Calvin suggested,

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example, Willem Balke views Westerburg as an Anabaptist who strongly adhered to the position, while Russell S. Woodbridge argues that Westerburg, although somewhat influenced by Karlstadt, only held to "sleep" as an analogy for death. See Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, 32; and Woodbridge, "Gerhard Westerburg: His Life and Doctrine of Purgatory and Lord's Supper" (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 135–37. Gergely M. Juhász presents a brief outline of Westerburg's Latin booklet and develops much of Westerburg's argument regarding the sleep of the soul from Westerburg's German work. See Juhász, *Translating Resurrection: The Debate Between William Tyndale and George Joye in Its Historical and Theological Context*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 183–88. See also Philips, *The Writings of Dirk Philips, 1504–1568,* ed. Dyck et al., (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), 635 n. 6; and "Westerburg, Gerhard" in Leland Harder, ed., *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism: The Grebel Letters and Related Documents* (Scottdale, PA: Hearld Press, 1985), 571. Anabaptist leader Conrad Grebel records having seen Westerburg's booklet in a letter in October 1524. See "Grebel['s Letter] to Vadian, Zurich, October 14, 1524," in Harder, ed., *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*, 295; and document no. 407 in Emil Arbenz and Hermann Wartmann, eds., *Die Vadianische Briefsammlung der Stadtbibliothek St. Gallen, Mitteilungen zur vaterläendischen Geschichte. Historischer Verein des Kantons St. Gallen*, vol. XXVII (St. Gallen: Fehr'sche Buchhandlung, 1897), 88–89. Finally, for Zwingli's attack on soul sleep, see his "Auctarium" to his *Contra Catabaptistarum Stophas Elenchus*, in ZW 6/1: 188–93; "Refutation of the Tricks of the Catabaptists, 1527," in *Selected Works of Huldreich Zwingli (1484–1531)*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1901), 123–258, esp. 251–55.

19 Michael Sattler is another Anabaptist who seems cryptic regarding the state of the soul after death. Sattler's testimony at his trial records the early Anabaptist leader defending why Anabaptists did not pray to the saints because "we who believe are the saints, but those who have died in the faith we regard as the blessed," in *The Trial and Martyrdom of Michael Sattler*, here via George H. Williams and Angel M. Mergal, eds., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers,* Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1957), 138–44; cf. the account of the trial sent by Wilhelm Reublin to the Brethren in Zollikon and elsewhere in Switzerland, *Bericht Wilhelm* [*Röublis*] *an die Täufer in der Schweiz* via QGT I, ed. Leonhard von Muralt and Walter Schmid (Zurich: S. Hirzel, 1952), No. 224, pp. 250–253.

20 Walker, *John Calvin*, 124.

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but from Italy, was held by Camillo Renato and Michael Servetus, and had been condemned at the Fifth Lateran Council in 1513.[21] Nevertheless, the notion of soul sleep, which could be easily argued through the Hebrew understandings of the afterlife (sleeping with one's ancestors), especially when combined with the sleep-related language of the apostle Paul regarding death,[22] was actually growing in popularity among certain sectarian groups, including "French Paduans, Italian rationalists, Libertines, and Illuminists,"[23] but also among Lutherans, and could even be found in the theology of Martin Luther himself.[24]

Like the Wittenberg theologian, the early Calvin perhaps did not know exactly what Anabaptists precisely believed. And like Huldrych Zwingli, Calvin simply blamed Anabaptists for a number of errors, later even claiming that all Anabaptists held to this view and reintroduced it to the world.[25] One can then only speculate as to why Calvin chose this theological idea as his first writing.[26] What can be established at this point, Karl Wyneken has well observed, is that "like most of the Reformers, John Calvin loosely applied the terms 'Anabaptist,' 'fanatic,' and similar epithets to a number of diverse groups within what is

21 Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, 31, 33. See also George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University, 1992), 198. Although both Balke and Williams posit that the origin of the sixteenth-century theories of soul sleep as deriving from Padua, Woodbridge alternatively pinpoints its origin in Bologna. Woodbridge writes, "In 1516, Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1524), a professor at the University of Bologna, issued his *On the Immortality of the Soul* in which he argued that the soul was mortal and, therefore, did not possess a conscious existence after death. This position, a form of psychopannychism, technically referred to as thnetopsychism, rejected the Roman Catholic Church's belief in the immortality of the soul and certainly undermined the concept of purgatory" (Woodbridge, "Gerhard Westerburg," 135).

22 E.g., 1 Thess. 4:15–17; 1 Cor. 15:51.

23 Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, 33; cf. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 585.

24 E.g., Luther wrote: "Just as soon as your eyes are closed, you will be awakened. A thousand years will seem as though you have slept a half an hour. As we do not know how long we are sleeping if we do not hear the clock striking during the night, so in death a thousand years will pass away still more rapidly. Before we shall be able to look around, we shall be beautiful angels." WA 36:349; English translation via Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 416 n. 52.

25 "Against Anabaptism," sig. F8 (CO 7: col. 103), via Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, 33 n. 70.

26 Walker conjectures, "It is difficult to see why Calvin should have selected this relatively insignificant fragment of Anabaptist speculation for refutation unless it had been more than ordinarily discussed in the little group of friends among whom he was in some sense the leader" (Walker, *John Calvin*, 124). Alternatively, Bruce Gordon reasons, "In truth, neither the doctrine of the immortality of the soul nor the Anabaptists were his primary concern. He had in mind someone else from his Paris days: the medical student Michael Servetus and his Italian circle in Paris." See Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 43.

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commonly known as the radical or nonmagisterial, Reformation."[27] As to why Calvin used the label "Anabaptist" imprecisely and much too broadly, whether he was simply unaware of their actual beliefs – like the early Luther – or whether he intentionally used the Anabaptist label as a useful target for his criticisms, may become more evident in his subsequent writings.

Nevertheless, as if anticipating a life-long battle with these radicals, Calvin presaged in his *Psychopannychia*: "If I am to have a future fight with them, I am determined they shall find me, if not a very skillful, yet certainly a firm, and as I dare promise, by God's grace, an invincible defender of the Truth."[28] Accusing the Anabaptists of ignorance regarding the Scriptures, Calvin argued that they held forth on topics of which they had only sophomoric knowledge. "Hence," he concluded, "so many schisms, so many errors, so many stumbling-blocks to our faith, through which the name and word of God are blasphemed among the ungodly.... O pernicious pest! O tares certainly sown by an enemy's hand, for the purpose of rendering the true seed useless!"[29]

Then, as if anticipating his next move against them and for the unity of the faith, Calvin made one final thrust at the Anabaptists: "Here, however," he said, "I desist from my complaints: for I should write a large volume were I to disclaim in just terms on the perversity of this age."[30] Perhaps more than coincidentally, Calvin's next theological project following his 1536 revisions of this treatise was a "large volume," first published in the same year, where he would outline and begin his lifelong work to refine his theology in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion.*

2 The 1536 Edition of the *Institutes*

Although it would be a gross overstatement to imply that the Anabaptists were the sole or even primary focus of his theology primer, in at least twenty-five separate addresses on various aspects of theology within this first edition

27 Karl H. Wyneken, "Calvin and Anabaptism," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 36, no. 1 (Jan 1965), 18.

28 Calvin, "Psychopannychia," 416; CO 5: col. 173–174.

29 Calvin, "Psychopannychia," 417–418; CO 5: col. 175–176. In a rousing section of Karl Barth's *The Theology of John Calvin*, the neo-orthodox theologian opined that *Psychopannychia* was not only Calvin's first foray into theology, but his first defense for the clear authority of the Word of God "over all human conceits.... He took hold of the Bible as the supreme critical principle and used this principle to distinguish the freedom of God's children from the freedom of fools." Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 150.

30 Calvin, "Psychopannychia," 418; CO 5: col. 175–176.

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of his work, Calvin indirectly referenced rivaling Anabaptist perspectives, demonstrating that these radicals were in no way absent from his thoughts. However, the fact that the Münster rebellion took place a year earlier by a group of chiliastic Anabaptist extremists perhaps muddied the already opaque waters of Anabaptist identity for outsiders and onlookers in Europe. Alister McGrath notes that it was during the time of writing the *Institutes* in Basel that Calvin "would see the *évangéliques* described as seditious and rebellious Anabaptists, not worthy to be compared with their distinguished German Protestant counterpart."[31] Such a backdrop is helpful in understanding what would be Calvin's "two-pronged" theological approach to apologetics in his magnum opus.[32] In his "Epistle Dedicatory to [King] Francis" as the preface to the *Institutes*, this bilateral method is immediately demonstrated. Following his "Plea for the Persecuted Evangelicals," Calvin dove into several arguments critical of the developments of perceived medieval abuses and distortions of the Western church followed by a section on what the reformer titled "Tumults Alleged to Result from Reformation Teaching." In other words, Calvin's strategy was to attack Catholics on his right, Anabaptist radicals on his left. Regarding the latter, Calvin was quick to denounce "how many disturbances, tumults and contentions" were attributed to Reformation teaching, when such distortions by the radicals should more readily be ascribed to the Devil. The divine Word, Calvin argued, "never comes forth while Satan is at rest and sleeping."[33] This is why, Calvin reasoned, the world had been through a period of Dark Ages, as the Catholic Church itself, without the help of Satan, wrought all forms of distortions onto the people. But with the return to the Truth in the era of Reformation, the evil one sought violently to repel proper reform. Calvin elaborated: "He aroused disagreements and dogmatic contentions through his Catabaptists [(a popular synonym for Anabaptists)] and other monstrous rascals in order to obscure and at least extinguish the truth."[34] Calvin took to great pains in his letter to the king to differentiate his movement from all Anabaptists:

31 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 76. See also the letter of Francis I to the German Protestant princes (February 1, 1535): A.-L. Herminjard, *Correspondance des réformaterus dans les pays de langue française,* vol. 3 (1533–1536) (Geneva, 1870), 250–54.

32 Ford Lewis Battles makes this point. See his "Endnotes" to John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536 Edition*, trans. Battles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 231.

33 Calvin, *Institutes* (1536), 11; See also John Calvin, *Christianae Religionis Institutio* (Basel, 1536) [hereafter *Institutio* (1536)], 34.

34 Calvin, *Institutes* (1536), 12; *Institutio* (1536), 34.

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> And we are unjustly charged … with the intentions of a sort such as we have never even given the least suspicion. We are, I suppose, contriving the overthrow of kingdoms – we, from whom not one seditious word was ever heard; we, whose life when we lived under you was always acknowledged to be quiet and simple; we, who do not cease to pray for the full prosperity of yourself and your kingdom, although we are now fugitives from home![35]

Bruce Gordon notes here that Calvin "wished to relieve Francis of any impression that evangelicals were to be confused with Anabaptists, the true agents of Satan and disseminators of unrest."[36]

It is notable that this cover letter was penned in September of 1535, only three months after Catholic and Protestant forces besieged Münster and ended the extremist standoff there, an event that rocked Central and Western Europe, raised fears amongst its citizens regarding the radicals, and ultimately accelerated Anabaptist persecution through much of the continent. As Bruce Gordon characterized Calvin's feelings during this time, "the evangelicals who declared the verities of grace, scripture, and faith alone should not be tarred with the brush of sedition rightly applied to Anabaptists polluting the kingdom."[37] Consequently, Calvin performed rhetorical backflips here for Francis in order to make the point that Calvin's Reformation was a divine work and was not to be conflated with the extreme fringes of Anabaptism.

Although Calvin had probably not yet encountered an Anabaptist by this writing and was primarily dependent upon Martin Bucer for his understanding of them, it is evident that Calvin was also quietly following the order of the Swiss Anabaptists' *Schleitheim Confession of Faith*, as Calvin sporadically addressed each topic as had been outlined in that confession now in his *Institutes* even often in the order of the sections laid out by Michael Sattler and his band.[38] Thus, it can be stated that an Anabaptist confession contributed to the shape and ordering of Calvin's 1536 *Institutes*, even if much of the time Calvin was merely indirectly refuting the convictions of the Swiss Anabaptist confession. For example, Calvin discussed oath-taking, proper understandings of the incarnation, excommunication, baptism, the office of pastor, the doctrine of

35 Calvin, *Institutes* (1536), 13; *Institutio* (1536), 35.

36 Gordon, *Calvin*, 59–60.

37 Bruce Gordon, *John Calvin's 'Institutes of the Christian Religion': A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 24.

38 Battles makes this observation. See Calvin, *Institutes* (1536), 242. See also W.E. Keeney, "An Analysis of Calvin's Treatment of the Anabaptists in the *Institutes*," (Hartford Seminary Paper, unpublished, 1958).

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perfection, and, finally, civil government, with numerous indirect references to the Anabaptists throughout, all in the order Sattler originally laid out.

Much could be developed on Calvin's comments pertaining to each of these theological topics related to Anabaptism. For instance, Calvin's appears to continue to misunderstand Anabaptist theology, or he at least construed one theologian's views as representing the entire movement. For example, Calvin seemed to perceive that all Anabaptists believed in Christ's "celestial flesh," thus denying the dual nature of Christ.[39] In fact, such a view was indeed held in variegated forms by Melchior Hoffman, Dirk Philips and Menno Simons, though the latter did not even strictly deny Christ's dual nature, and, more importantly, other Anabaptists did not join the Dutch Anabaptists in such a Christology. A second example was Calvin's perception that all Anabaptists believed in Christian perfection following baptism. Yet numerous Anabaptist sources, from the writings of Hubmaier to the *Scheitheim Confession* itself, portrayed either an agreement with Luther's notion of *simul justus et peccator* or at least posited that, though a Christian may remain in sin, such a person would be answerable for it in the time of Judgment.[40] As Pilgram Marpeck wrote: "If [Christians] do sin, however, they cannot claim to be in grace until their sins have again been cleansed and, through confession, remorse and sorrow for their sins, they return to true goodness."[41] These more dominant views in the

39 The concept of Christ's "celestial flesh" proposed that Jesus did not inherit his physical nature from Mary but received it unblemished from the heavenly realm.

40 It should be noted that Bucer had recorded Melchior Hoffman as having testified before the Strasbourg Territorial Synod that intentional sin following baptism could not be pardoned. See Manfred Krebs and Jean Rott, eds., QGT VIII: *Elass*, 2. *Stadt Strassburg* 1533–1535 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1960), nos. 402, 444, pg. 275 and no. 384, p. 83; here via Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 418. Additionally, Hoffman disciple David Joris had attempted to require the Melchiorites' submission to his own leadership in Hoffman's absence (because of the latter's imprisonment), demanding spiritual perfection from them. Subsequently many Melchiorites in Strasbourg joined the reformed church under Bucer. See Joris, "Antwoort vp Hans Eysenbürchs vorrenden," in Joris, "Hydeckel," *Jorislade*, vol. 9, Sendbriefen, Manuscript and Rare Book Department, University of Basel, 305–21; and Joris in *The Anabaptist Writings of David Joris, 1535–1543*, ed. Gary K. Waite (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994), 155–56. Calvin then may have garnered his perfectionist caricature of the Anabaptists from Bucer's experience with Melchiorites in Strasbourg. Finally, Catholic spiritualist Dirck Coornhert, who held to views far outside of Catholic orthodoxy, would both serve as a contemporary nemesis to Calvin's view of predestination and influence the Christian ethics of the Dutch Waterlanders, especially John de Ries. See Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 1186–1187.

41 See Pilgram Marpeck, "Men in Judgment and the Peasant Aristocracy (1547)," in Marpeck, *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, ed. William Klassen and Walter Klaassen (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978), 470; Manfred Krebs and Jean Rott, eds., QGT VII: *Elsass*, 1. *Stadt Strassburg 1522–1532* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1959), 309.

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Anabaptist tradition which rejected the notion of Christian perfection in this life would be why regular mutual confession was necessary before each Lord's Supper service in many Anabaptist congregations.[42] Only a church which believed in the pervasiveness of sin would require such a continual rite for receiving forgiveness.

Interestingly, while Calvin labeled the Anabaptists as nemeses in his prefatory letter to King Francis, in the various sections of the body of this first edition of the *Institutes* the Anabaptists are not mentioned by name.[43] Instead, Calvin referred to them generically as "adversaries" and sometimes by even more vague terms such as "they," or inferred that they were modern-day "Manichees" and "Donatists."[44] For instance, in arguing how Christians can

42 Hubmaier would write: "They also spread the rumor about us that we boast we are able to sin no more after baptism. They also spread many other inventions which never come to mind or into the mind of any other orthodox and goodhearted Christian. For although they decry us as factions and sects, so did it also happen with Christ, Jeremiah, Paul and others; …" Here cited from Pipkin and Yoder translation, 97; QGT IX, 119.

43 For instance, in discussing his view of the Incarnation in the Christological section of the Apostles' Creed, Calvin critiqued his opponents: "Those who despoil Christ of either his divinity or his humanity either blaspheme God's majesty or obscure his goodness." *Institutes* (*1536*), 51–52. Later in his *Brief Instruction* Calvin identified "those who despoil Christ of his humanity" as being the Anabaptists when he wrote: "Pour le premier ie monstreray, par plusieurs et trescertains tesmoignages de l'escriture, comme nostre Seigneur Iesus a prins vrayement nostsre chair et nature humaine, quand il nous a esté revelé de Dieu son Pere en ce monde: et le monstreray tant evidemment, qu'il n'y aura si petit enfant qui ne congnoisse, que ce seroit trop grande impudence aux Anabaptistes de tergiverser plus outre, here via "Brieve Instruction pour Armer Tous Bons Fideles contre les Erreurs de la Secte Commune des Anabaptistes." CO 7: col. 104. Benjamin Wirt Farley would render these sentences: "First I will show by many and very convincing testimonies of the Scriptures that our Lord Jesus truly took on our flesh and human nature when He was revealed to us by God His Father in this world. And I will demonstrate it so clearly that even a little child will realize what a grave impudence it is for the Anabaptists to deny it any longer." See the ET of Calvin's "Brief Instruction: On the Incarnation" in Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, trans. and ed. Benjamin Wirt Farley (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 109. Yet, as George H. Williams has outlined, Menno Simons' particular notion of Christ's "celestial flesh" was not a denial of the humanity of Christ but an argument that Christ's flesh did not come from Mary. See Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 488–494. Nevertheless, this Christological notion was not a standard view of most Anabaptists.

44 For "adversaries," see *Institutes* (1536), 87, *Institutio* (1536), 118; for "Manichees," see *Institutes* (1536), 53, *Institutio* (1536), 80; and for "Donatists," see *Institutes* (1536), 99, *Institutio* (1536), 133. Calvin additionally used "some" in the same manner. For instance, in discussing whether a Christian can seek assistance from a magistrate, Calvin wrote: "But, *some* will object, not only are they forbidden to desire revenge, but they are also bidden to wait upon the hand of the Lord…." *Institutes* (1536), 218 [emphasis mine]; *Institutio* (1536), 272. Along with his 1544 *Brief Instruction for Arming All the Good Faithful Against*

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legitimately serve in government, Calvin referenced the potentially troublesome passage, Luke 22:25f (that disciples are not be like the kings of the Gentiles but, instead, the first should become the least of these). Here Calvin writes: "By this saying, *they* tell us, all Christians are forbidden to engage in kingdoms or governments."[45]

3 Calvin and the Stordeur Family

While Anabaptists were apparently among the population in Calvin's Geneva, the first empirical evidence that Calvin personally encountered any Anabaptists was not until 1537. In that year, as Theodore Beza later recorded, two Anabaptists from the Low Countries, more specifically from Liège (Luik), in present-day Belgium, who had fled persecution there and made their way to Geneva in 1533, had over their years of residence in the Swiss city gained a hearing amongst the citizenry and were subsequently, in 1537, invited formally to debate Calvin and Farel. Jean Stordeur and Johannes Bomeromanus were among those Anabaptists who would hold some two or three debates with the reformers of Geneva before being banned from the city at the end of March 1537.[46] Yet, in a fascinating turn of events, Calvin's life would become

the Errors of the Common Sect of the Anabaptists, subsequent editions of the *Institutes* make clear, whether by context or by further clarity, that Calvin often had the Anabaptists in mind for these references. E.g., by the time of Calvin's French edition (1541), the reformer explains: "The Anabaptists today are like the Donatists. The Anabaptists deny that we have been rightly baptized because we were baptized by unbelievers and idolaters in the kingdom of the pope," *Institution de la religion chrestienne* (Geneva: 1541) [hereafter *Institution* (1541)], 591; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1541 French Edition, trans. Elsie Anne McKee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) [hereafter *Institutes* (1541)], 518. For his 1541 comparison between Manicheans and Anabaptists, see *Institution* (1541), 482; *Institutes* (1541), 427. For his comparisons between Anabaptists and Donatists in *A Brief Instruction*, see CO 7: col. 76; for his comparison between Anabaptists and Manicheans in *A Brief Instruction*, see CO 7: col. 103. It should be noted that Diet of Speyer in 1529 introduced the death penalty as a legal consequence for rebaptism. While more draconian in punishment than was typical, the new canon was built on the precedent of actions taken against Donatists and Manichaeans in previous centuries while attributing similar charges of heresy to the Anabaptists in their sixteenth-century context. Hence, Calvin's use of these associations is not original. For further analysis of the Diet of Speyer regarding ancient heresies and their association with sixteenth-century Anabaptists, see Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 355–62.

45 Calvin, *Institutes* (1536), 210 [emphasis mine]; *Institutio* (1536), 262.

46 Donald D. Smeeton, "Calvin's Conflict with the Anabaptists," *Evangelical Quarterly* 54 (Jan–March 1982), 48; B.J. Kidd, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Continental Reformation*

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intertwined with this Anabaptist group in general and with the Stordeur family in particular.

The following year, Calvin himself would be expelled from Geneva. Ironically, this expulsion may in part be due to his and Farel's decision at one point to deny the Lord's Supper for disciplinary reasons and from those with whom they theologically disagreed, including Anabaptists. And while the city council had banned a number of Anabaptists from the city on paper, new sympathies amongst some on the council for the Anabaptists (or at least for any dissenting group against Calvin's and Farel's own confession) seem to demonstrate a tacit support amongst a number on the council for the radicals' inclusion at the Table.[47] As William J. Bouwsma observed, "Supported by the Anabaptists and hostile to the demand that the power of excommunication be transferred to the ministers, the magistrates expelled Calvin and Farel from Geneva in May of 1538."[48] Thus, Calvin found himself exiled once again.

1538 would serve as a crucial year for the young Calvin's exposure to and clearer assessment of the Anabaptists. Taking refuge in Strasbourg where he became a minister to a congregation of French refugees, Calvin's return to this city on the French border was a natural choice. Strasbourg had been nicknamed "the City of Hope" and the "Refuge of Righteousness." And Calvin discovered Strasbourg to be a sanctuary not only for those of magisterial reformed convictions but for a significant Anabaptist population as well. Among the refugees of this latter group were his recent debate counterparts Bomeromanus and Stordeur, along with Jean Stordeur's father-in-law, Lambert de Bure, and Stordeur's wife, Idelette de Bure.

(Oxford: Clarendon, 1911), 572–573; Theodore Beza, "Life of Calvin," here cited in Henry Beveridge, trans., *Tracts and Treatises*, 1: lxviii.

47 As Balke noted, "The Anabaptist threat in Geneva was far more serious than had been realized. On the one hand, the Anabaptist pastors had gained somewhat of a following among the populace. On the other hand, they were favored by the Libertine faction, and even by some of the magistrates," 95. For further development of the Anabaptist involvement in Geneva reformers' conflict with the town and its council during this time, see Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, esp. 92–95. However, William G. Naphy downplays such claims, positing that "there is no evidence of widespread Anabaptist sympathy in Geneva and the cases brought against Anabaptists, with one exception, involved foreigners" (Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994], 32, see also 222–23). Conversely, François Wendel infers that the Anabaptists were significant opponents with whom Calvin was forced to contend in the early portion of his ministry in Geneva. See Wendel, *Calvin: The Origin and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 53.

48 William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 20.

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Here Calvin joined the Strasbourg reformers Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer who long experienced both interactions amongst and even some affinities with Anabaptists of the area. Without the heavy burden of governing the ecclesial matters of an entire city, Calvin was introduced to a number of Anabaptists more personally and, according to Beza, worked to convert a number of them to Reformed Protestantism. Most notably, Calvin began discussions with the Stordeur household, perhaps even carrying out lengthy theological exchanges in the Stordeur home. As William J. Petersen observed,

> Eventually, Calvin's use of Scripture convinced the Stordeurs in most of their areas of difference, but not all. In some, perhaps, Calvin tempered his own thinking. But soon the Stordeurs were in Calvin's church, partaking of the Lord's Supper; after further discussion, they had their son baptized by Calvin; eventually, the entire family became members of the church which now numbered nearly 500 refugees from France and the Low Countries.[49]

Both statements by Petersen regarding Calvin's interactions with the Stordeurs should be underscored: he converted the couple to Reformed Protestantism, but he likely moderated and even modified his own theology in doing so. The following year, Jean Stordeur was stricken with the plague and died. By August, at the recommendation of Martin Bucer, John Calvin married Idelette, ending a decade-long search for a wife by, ironically, marrying the widow of a formerly outspoken Anabaptist. Calvin credited Idelette for being "a faithful helper" in his work and for being "the best companion" in his life.[50] Although challenged with difficult life circumstances, illness, and the loss of a son in infancy and perhaps two or more daughters in miscarriage or infancy, Idelette appears to have been an a excellent match for Calvin's weaknesses, managing the boarding house where they lived in Strasbourg and helping her husband keep his temper under control in the face of great opposition, along with raising the children of her first marriage. After only nine years of marriage to Calvin, she would die, probably of tuberculosis, in Geneva in 1549 at age 40.

Because John Calvin was such a private individual, we know very little about the theological influence that Idelette may have had on him. However, his subsequent writings do manifest a paradoxical quality: On the one hand, following

49 William J. Petersen, "Idelette: John Calvin's Search for the Right Wife," in *Christian History*, Issue 12 (1986); accessed March 11, 2017: https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/idelette-john-calvins-search-for-the-right-wife.

50 Petersen, "Idelette," ibid.

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his nuptials Calvin's writings sometimes demonstrated greater nuance regarding the Anabaptists in all their variety. On the other, Calvin's rhetoric, at least against what he perceived to be the worst of the radicals, was only heightened.

4 Anabaptist Influence in Strasbourg

Despite this paradox, or perhaps even more puzzling because of it, Calvin was also clearly influenced by the Anabaptist thought to which he was more fully exposed in Strasbourg. For instance, Franklin Littell has observed that Calvin's exile in Strasbourg served as a means of education and transformation of Calvin regarding his appreciation of the Anabaptists, to the point that, as Littell has argued, the Anabaptists at least indirectly shaped Calvin's ecclesiology.[51] For in the year that Calvin made his way to Strasbourg, his friend and sometime host in that city, Martin Bucer, had just returned from a successful trip to Hesse wherein he negotiated a union between the magisterial and Anabaptist Christians of that territory. Here Bucer appreciated that both Anabaptists and magisterial Protestants upheld a sense of covenant theology, for the former in the form of a voluntary assent to congregational rule of the local church (as opposed to the rule of the state), for the latter as a sense of soteriological security of the children of Christians. By forging the idea of a Protestant notion of confirmation of one's previous baptism, wherein each person may consciously affirm one's voluntary submission to Christ and his Church when he or she comes of age, Bucer struck one of the greatest theological compromises in the sixteenth century, combining the essence of both notions of covenant, and he unified most of the Anabaptists in Hesse within the state church there. As Littell noted, "the reformers of Hesse agreed to reinstitute church discipline, and the Anabaptists agreed to return to the public worship of God."[52]

Parenthetically, although Hesse was an anomalous breakthrough and compromise through Bucer's efforts, Anabaptists elsewhere were also known for complaining about the lack of discipline in Reformed congregations. Martin Weninger, an Anabaptist leader in Schaffhausen, explained in 1535 why Anabaptists would not attend Reformed churches:

> Dear one, how many are now Christ's brethren who do God's will? Therefore, your fellowship is not a brotherhood [*bruderschaft*] of Christ.

51 See Franklin H. Littell, "What Calvin Learned at Strassburg," in John H. Bratt, ed., *The Heritage of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 74–86.

52 Littell, "What Calvin Learned at Strassburg," 82.

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> For you have as brethren: adulterers, heavy drinkers, blasphemers, misers, usurers, dancers, carnival [masqueraders], alley ruffians; without a ban to make any difference, whether a person do good or evil. Dear one, why? For this reason, that the priests who ought to discipline the people are just like the people. Therefore Paul teaches and admonishes us to keep clear of such people.[53]

It was into this context following Bucer's triumphant compromise, at the advent of Calvin's arrival in Strasbourg, that his mentor and fellow reformer not only introduced Calvin to Anabaptists of the city but also to a greater appreciation of their concerns. To that end, as he would return to Geneva some three years later, Calvin would significantly expand the place of church discipline within his ecclesiology, leading some contemporary scholars subsequently to suggest the practice as becoming akin to a "third mark" of the church in Calvin's thought, along with the rightful preaching of the Word and the distribution of the sacraments.[54] More precisely, it was Bucer who had added ecclesial discipline to preaching and administration of the sacraments as the church's third mark,[55] an idea later reflected in subsequent Reformed creeds such as the *Scots Confession* (1560) and the *Belgic Confession* (1561).[56] For his part, Calvin maintained the two marks of Word and Sacraments only. But his inveterate position regarding the church's dual marks belie Calvin's now enhanced view of discipline.[57] Though he conceded that the church may exist without faithful discipline, as he had perceived the church in Geneva to have

53 Martin Weninger, *Vindication of Martin Weninger Called Lingki: Reasons Why the Anabaptists Separate Themselves From Our Churches, Worship Services and Sermons*, here cited in J.C. Wenger, trans. and ed., "Martin Weninger's *Vindication of Anabaptism, 1535*," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 22, no. 3 (July 1948): 184–85.

54 E.g., Littell makes this argument ("What Calvin Learned at Strassburg," 83).

55 See both François Wendel, *Calvin*, 301; and Timothy E. Fulop, "The Third Mark of the Church? – Church in the Reformed and Anabaptist Reformations," *Journal of Religious History* 19, no. 1 (June 1995): 26–42.

56 See Stephen M. Johnson, "'The Sinews of the Body of Christ': Calvin's Concept of Church Discipline," *Westminster Theological Journal* 59, no. 1 (Spring 1997): esp. 90.

57 For further development of Bucer's interactions and affinities with along with concessions to an Anabaptist view of church discipline, as well as Bucer's influence over Calvin on the same subject, see Kenneth R. Davis, "No Discipline, No Church: An Anabaptist Contribution to the Reformed Tradition," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 43–58. Alternatively, Matthew Scott Harding argues "that such an ecclesiological doctrinal development in Calvin – owing to an Anabaptist presence or practice of church discipline in Strasbourg, is unlikely" and that Calvin had already articulated a similar view of church discipline before 1538. See Harding, "A Calvinist and Anabaptist Understanding of the Ban," *Perichoresis* 10, no. 2 (2012): 165–93, esp. 166, 181–82.

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done in his first term in that city, Calvin now argued that such churches cannot subsist long without it.[58] In his letter to Sadoleto in 1539, Calvin wrote: "There are three things upon which the safety of the Church is founded and supported: Doctrine, discipline and the sacraments."[59] As Stephen Johnson observed, now "discipline for Calvin, while not a mark of the church, serves to preserve the marks of the church."[60] Calvin would explain this view in his later editions of the *Institutes*: "As saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the Church, so discipline serves as its sinews, through which members of the body hold together, each in its own place. Therefore, all who desire to remove discipline or hinder its restoration – whether they do this deliberately or out of ignorance – are surely contributing to the ultimate dissolution of the church."[61] Thus, one can argue that Calvin's time in Strasbourg, with Bucer and the Anabaptists who had previously influenced the German reformer there, helped ferment Calvin's own accentuation of fraternal admonition, giving him greater theological justification for his desire to empower ecclesial discipline over against the power of the state in spiritual matters upon his return to Geneva. As Bouwsma acknowledged regarding Calvin's ecclesiology at this point, "he yearned for a pure church, a visible and exclusive community of saints, however small.... This suggested a separatist model of the church; a part of Calvin was closer to Anabaptism than he would have cared to admit."[62]

Beyond church discipline one may also observe how Calvin was shaped by an Anabaptist view of and terminology for marriage. Calvin, who had already created a robust covenantal theological system, now began also to refer to the institution of marriage as a "covenant." Only after Strasbourg did Calvin begin to use this language regarding the rite. Calvin's later sermons, lectures and commentaries manifested this new language to describe marriage, an idea Calvin clearly borrowed from the Anabaptists with whom he interacted in Strasbourg and one of whom he himself married.[63] Even though, as John Witte, Jr., points

58 Indeed, Calvin would write Gaspar Lister in Nurlingen in 1554, "I congratulate you on the tranquility of your churches, but it is greatly to be regretted that you do not possess, along with it, the sinews of discipline so necessary to insure its continuance." See Ep. 1999 (27 Aug 1554) in CO 15: col. 214–215, here 214; then the ET in Calvin, *Letters of John Calvin*, vol. 3, ed. and trans. Jules Bonnet (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858), 66–67, here 67.

59 John Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, ed. and trans. J.K.S. Reid, Library of Christian Classics 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 232; CO 5: col. 394.

60 Stephen M. Johnson, "'The Sinews of the Body of Christ,'" 91.

61 *Institutes* (1559), IV.12.1.

62 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 217–18.

63 The language is now new to Calvin. It is worth noting that the Anabaptists had already been utilizing the same term for marriage. See Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 420–21.

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out, "The idea of a divine covenant or agreement between God and humanity had long been taught in the Western church," Calvin began to observe how often the Bible used the same term to describe marriage.[64] Thus, Calvin concluded, the term applies not only to pledges binding God to humanity, but also humans to one another. This more anthropomorphic notion of covenant, paralleling their idea of the human covenant to God and one another established in baptism, was a construction borrowed from the Anabaptists.[65]

5 Calvin's Mature Polemics against the Anabaptists

Despite the appropriation of some of the concerns of the Anabaptists he encountered in Strasbourg, it is not surprising that Calvin's 1539 revision, along with his 1541 French translation of his *Institutes*, nevertheless demonstrated a more robust apologetic for infant baptism. Moving from some four paragraphs of explanation on the sacrament in his first edition to an entire chapter on the topic, with a large section defending the continued practice of infant baptism among Protestants, Calvin appears more purposeful to parry Anabaptist attacks. In introducing his new argument, Calvin made clear his intended adversary: "Now we see that our observance of baptizing little children is attacked by some wicked spirits," he opined,

> as if it had not been instituted by God but newly invented by people, or at least appeared some years after the apostles. So we believe it is the duty of our office to confirm weak consciences in this matter and to refute the

64 E.g., "… the Lord was a witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth," Mal. 2:13–14. See Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2012), 185.

65 E.g., Calvin wrote, "When a marriage takes place between a man and a woman, God presides and requires a mutual pledge from both. Hence Solomon in Proverbs 2:17 calls marriage the covenant of God, for it is superior to all human contracts. So also Malachi [2:14] declares that God is, as it were, the stipulator [of marriage], who by his authority joins the man to the woman, and sanctions the alliance." *Praelectionum in Duodecim Prophetas Minores*, here Malachi 2:14, in CO 45: col. 452; ET in Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, vol. 5: Zechariah and Malachi*, trans. John Owen (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849/repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 552–53. See also where Calvin states, "Marriage is not a thing ordained by men. We know that God is the author of it, and that it is solemnized by his name. The Scripture says that it is a holy covenant, and therefore calls it divine." *Sermons sur L'Epitre aux Ephesiens*, here Sermon 39: Ephesians 5:22–26, in CO 51: col. 736; ET in Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1973), 565.

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> lying objections which such seducers could make, to overturn God's truth in the hearts of the simple who would not be well practiced to respond to the tricks and equivocations of these people.[66]

Moreover, Calvin implied that an attack on infant baptism was nothing short of spiritual warfare on God's long-established intentions for the church: "Let us come to the arguments with which the evil spirit has tried to envelop more than a few people in error and deception, under cover of wanting to stick 'just to God's word.' Let us consider what force there is in all Satan's activities by which he attempts to overturn this holy ordinance of the Lord, which has always (as was fitting) been reverently observed in His church."[67] To make clear what nefarious group he is addressing, Calvin finally calls them by name: "Already everyone can see that the baptism of little children was not rashly made up by people, since it has such clear approval from scripture.... What these Anabaptists sow is a pure lie, to say that infant baptism was begun long after the apostles...."[68]

Although the focus of this chapter has been on the development of Calvin's understanding of and particularly his rhetoric regarding the Anabaptists in the early reformation, a brief overview of how his thought matured later in his life seems pertinent. In 1541, Calvin was invited to return to Geneva. To say he went reluctantly and only under pressure, from both his colleagues in Strasbourg and the council in Geneva, would be an understatement. Calvin would write that in place of going to Geneva, "rather would I submit to death a hundred times than to that cross on which I had to perish daily a thousand times over,"[69] and, in retrospect in 1550, "were a free choice allowed me, I would prefer any lot to groaning continually under so grievous a burden"[70] of returning there. Yet, Calvin did return, compelled by what Littell called "his sense of the strategic importance of that gateway city to the cause of the gospel in France and Italy."[71] In other words, Calvin felt duty-bound to continue the progress against perceived Catholic abuses on the one hand and the infiltration of Anabaptist radicalism on the other. Just two years prior, in his reply to the Italian Cardinal Jacopo Sadoleto, Calvin characterized both the Anabaptists and the pope as

66 Calvin, *Institution* (1541), 594; *Institutes* (1541), 520.
67 Calvin, *Institution* (1541), 603; *Institutes* (1541), 527.
68 Calvin, *Institution* (1541), 601–602; *Institutes* (1541), 526.
69 CO 11: col. 30; here via T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2006), 105.
70 Calvin, "Letter to Francis Dryander, 7 March 1550," in Calvin, *Letters of John Calvin*, vol. 2, ed. Jules Bonnet (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1858), 265.
71 Littell, "What Calvin Learned at Strassburg," 83.

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weapons of Satan which attempt to "bury the Word of God."[72] His own work, he believed instead, was a biblical, orderly and purposeful project of reform, and one he still hoped would be implemented both in Geneva and in his homeland.

Perhaps in order to reinforce this differentiation, Calvin would publish a second work devoted to repudiate Anabaptism in his 1544 treatise, *Brief Instruction to Arm All Good Believers against the Errors of the Common Sect of the Anabaptists.*[73] While his 1536 edition of the *Institutes* happened upon each of the seven points of the *Schleitheim Confession*, the *Brief Instruction against the Anabaptists* was written as a direct response to that Anabaptist document.

Much could be said on Calvin's refutation of the Anabaptist positions within this treatise. Yet what is of greater importance to the topic at hand is a new nuance Calvin then demonstrated regarding both some Anabaptists along with some of their positions. For instance, Calvin at this juncture agreed, at least to a point, with the Anabaptist use of the ban, especially the biblical principle of first warning wayward Christians twice privately and a third time publicly in front of the entire congregation before denying them communion.[74] Yet, despite his previous sentiments regarding ecclesiology following his time in Strasbourg, he now railed against the Anabaptist instinct for separatism and what Calvin perceived as an unrealistic demand in the Christian life to maintain a church without spot or wrinkle.[75] Within the preface itself, Calvin peppered his rhetoric against the Anabaptists with such adjectives as "ignorant," "heretical," "inept," "haphazard," "insane," "poisonous," "tainted," "corrupt," and "void of senses and reason." He additionally referred to them as "vermin" and "poor fanatical ones" and accused them of "turpitude," discharging the "ruses of Satan."[76] At times, Calvin again accused all Anabaptists as holding positions held by only a minority of their ranks, especially the doctrines of celestial flesh of Christ and that of soul sleep. At the same time, Calvin conceded that there

72 Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, 230; CO 5: col. 393.

73 See n. 43 above.

74 Based upon Matthew 18:15–17.

75 *Ne nous abusons pas done, d'imaginer une Eglise parfaicte en ce monde: puis que nostre Seigneur Iesus a une foys denoncé, qu'elle sera semblable à une aire, en laquelle les bons grains sont tellement meslés parmy la paille, que souvent ilz n'apparoissent point* (*Matth. 3, 12* [*sic*]), CO 7: col. 66. Farley here translates: "Therefore, let us not deceive ourselves by imagining that a perfect church exists in this world, since our Lord Jesus Christ has declared that the kingdom will be like a field in which the good grain is so mixed with weeds that it is often not visible (Matt. 13:24)," in Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, 58.

76 CO 7: col. 52–55; Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, 39–43; Galen Johnson, "The Development of John Calvin's Doctrine of Infant Baptism in Reaction to the Anabaptists," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 73, no. 4 (Oct. 1999): 807.

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were extremists amongst the group, and he occasionally observed a more careful nuance. For instance, Calvin wrote:

> Touching that some among them have [held the] opinion that all goods should be common, also that a man may have many wives, so that they have compelled some which were content with one to take more, and a thousand other absurdities, I will speak nothing at all. For they themselves, being confused in themselves, have for the most part by little and little withdrawn themselves.[77]

Thus, while clearly written in a pejorative manner, Calvin demonstrated an understanding of the variegated qualities and differences amongst the Anabaptists. Yet as a good rhetorician, he used such differences as evidence of their own confusion. Willem Balke noted several instances in the document where Calvin likely misunderstood the Anabaptists. Nevertheless, Calvin's polemical skills far transcended that of his Anabaptist opponents, arguing his position as clearly more biblical and rendering the radicals as addlepated in their own interpretations. Balke observes:

> Whenever Calvin juxtaposed the Anabaptist teachings and his own concepts there was a marked difference in style. In setting forth his own ideas he used a very pious and biblical vocabulary. But when he dealt with the concepts of his opponents his language became almost colloquial and at times vulgar. Thus his very choice of vocabulary undermined the credibility of his opponents, while his own position was ennobled.[78]

Through creative comparisons, amusing illustrations and thoughtful appeals to logic, Calvin undermined much of the Anabaptist argumentation, describing their positions as stupidity, disordered and as supporting depravity.[79] Comparing the Anabaptists to the Jews in the synagogues in Jesus' day and to drunkards of his own, Calvin, observed Balke, "never analyzed or described [the Anabaptists] definitively, but they were [instead merely] characterized

77 "De ce qu'aucuns d'entre eux ont tenu touchant la communauté des biens, item qu'un homme peut avoir plusieurs femmes, iusques à y contraindre ceux qui se contetoyent d'une, et mille autres absurdités: ie me deporte d'en toucher," CO 7: col. 103. English translation via Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, 185.

78 Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, 187.

79 See Francis M. Higman, *The Style of John Calvin in His French Polemical Treatises* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 131, 147–48.

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and even caricatured" by him.[80] Yet, a year later, Calvin wrote a separate attack *Against the Libertines*,[81] here revealing that he perceived a distinction between this latter sect of pantheistic spiritualists and evangelical Anabaptists.[82]

6 The Final Editions of the *Institutes*

The last significant place where Calvin devoted much ink to the Anabaptists was in his final editions of the *Institutes*, in 1550 and 1559. Here Calvin wove the Anabaptists into his rhetoric, accusing "certain madmen of the Anabaptist sect" of being Marcionites, of all Anabaptists of denouncing the power of the Word of God, of "very many of the Anabaptists, especially those who marvelously exult in being considered spiritual" of limiting the time of penance to the catechized and not to all Christians, of "certain Anabaptists of our day" of requiring perfection among their congregants and of rejecting the notion that God actively willed the fall of humanity, for "some of the Anabaptists" for their sectarianism who falsely believed themselves as holy, of "certain Anabaptists" of holding that all post-baptismal sin is unforgiveable, and of "Catabaptists" for denying the legitimacy of government-sponsored baptism by supposedly wicked ministers and by subsequently urging rebaptism.

The nature of such attacks on the Anabaptists was not new, simply more numerous in the final editions of the *Institutes*. What is different in many of these charges is, once again, the quality of nuance Calvin used regarding them. In other words, while the early editions of the *Institutes*, along with his first treatise on soul sleep against the group, were for the most part blanket accusations, the mature Calvin demonstrated his understanding that not all Anabaptists were the same. And yet, Calvin was not always faithful to this new distinction, still sometimes accusing all Anabaptists of certain heresies. Such inconsistency on Calvin's part has left modern scholars to speculate. For instance, on the one hand, Balke praised Calvin along these lines as having the rare ability to distinguish between revolutionary and fanatical radicals from the pacifistic and evangelical varieties.[83] On the other hand, Benjamin Farley opined

80 Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, 188.

81 See *Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des Libertins qui se nomment spirituelz* in CO 7: col. 145–248; Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, 159–324.

82 Donald Smeeton posits that "although [the Libertines] are often classified as Anabaptist, Calvin saw a distinction. Because they rejected magisterial authority, they could be called Anabaptist, but additionally they rejected ecclesiastical authority and even Biblical authority." See Smeeton, "Calvin's Conflict with the Anabaptists," 49.

83 Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, 132.

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that Calvin, like so many of his contemporaries, could not discern between regional Anabaptist circles and did not understand, for example, that not all Anabaptists held to the celestial flesh of Christ.[84] William Bouwsma argued simply that "although Calvin frequently indicated his ability to distinguish sharply between the various Anabaptist movements, he often in his polemic throws them all on one heap. Consequently it is sometimes difficult to discern which Anabaptists or other radical group he had in mind when he referred to Fanatics."[85]

7 Conclusion

Whether Calvin truly appreciated the distinctions of the Anabaptists from other radicals, especially George H. Williams' now familiar groupings of Inspirationists and Rationalists outside of Anabaptism, and the distinctions of the Swiss Brethren from Dutch Mennonites and even Melchiorite radicals within this broad movement, may ultimately be irrelevant to this study.[86] Calvin simply needed, for his rhetorical purposes, a nemesis on his left, no matter how accurate he may have been regarding their actual beliefs. In some ways, he hit his target squarely on issues of baptism and rebaptism, a pure visible church over the temporarily invisible one, and the ongoing Anabaptist concern regarding a Christian's involvement in government and the public square. On other occasions, he often simply accused all Anabaptists of the peculiar beliefs of some without any concern as to accuracy or libeling the majority of a movement. For Calvin's part, the more peculiar, the more heretical, and the more disruptive and seditious his nemesis, the better. For the Anabaptists were used by the reformer for one primary purpose: to convince the king and the people of France, and in turn his own congregation, that the reformers were mainstream, were indeed not Anabaptists, and would do no harm to the crown or to the needed peaceful ecclesial modifications necessary in his homeland.

We are left then with a paradox regarding Calvin's writings about and interactions with the Anabaptists. Calvin exerted a great deal of thought and energy denouncing the Anabaptists, yet he found his own theology shaped by them, sometimes in antithesis to their thought, sometimes absorbing their ecclesial developments and making them touchstone features within Reformed

84 See Benjamin W. Farley's "Editor's Introduction" in Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, 32.

85 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 330.

86 Cf. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 212–245; 524–551, and 589–608.

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Protestantism. Yet, even in the latter case, Calvin would never give even the evangelical Anabaptists, whom he did not seem to so sharply oppose in his later life, proper credit for their influence. The dialectic of Calvin's approach to the radicals only makes sense when one considers Calvin's initial writings of *Psychopannychia* and the *Institutes*, particularly what Calvin revealed were his motivations in writing these documents in addressing King Francis. According to traditional interpretations of the reformer, the presenting issue for Calvin's exile from France, which so affected the remainder of his life, was the Affair of the Placards on October 18, 1534, in which placards critical of the Roman Mass were found spread throughout Paris, including in the king's own chambers. In the eyes of the French elites, most importantly to Francis I, all of Protestantism became viewed as a rebellious religion which brought about disturbances to public order. The German Peasants' War only exacerbated this perception. Noted Galen Johnson: "From the perspective of Francis, all Protestants – including everyone from Antoine Marcourt, the architect of the Placards incident, to Lutherans to Calvin – were like the German Anabaptists, a threat to political harmony." And to the point of this essay, Johnson continues, "One might say fairly that Calvin spent the rest of his life trying to distance himself from this distasteful comparison."[87]

His first theological writings, *Psychopannychia* and the 1536 *Institutes*, both demonstrate this motive in Calvin's cover letters to the French king. However, as evidence that this main intention never waned, Calvin would recall in his 1557 preface to his commentary on the Psalms that the king believed himself to be persecuting only "Anabaptists and seditious persons," yet many of Calvin's companions, the "faithful and holy," were among those in Francis' sites. "This," Calvin still conceded later in life, "was the consideration which induced me to publish my *Institute of the Christian Religion*. My objects were, first [and foremost], to prove that these reports were false and calumnious, and thus to vindicate my brethren, whose death was precious in the sight of the Lord."[88]

While Calvin spent most of his adult life as a reluctant reformer of a Swiss city, he was, to his core, a Frenchman who wished nothing more than for his king and country to accept Calvin's theological project and receive Protestantism in what Calvin viewed to be its moderate form between the perceived abuses of Rome and the fanaticism of the radicals and to appropriate his theological program as a peaceful, orderly and biblical reform of the church. Even if Calvin resonated with some features of Anabaptist theology, fashioning both church

87 Johnson, "The Development of John Calvin's Doctrine," 803.

88 Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 3 vols., trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 1: xli–xlii; via Johnson, "The Development of John Calvin's Doctrine," 803–804.

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discipline as the necessary means to preserve the church and covenantal marriage between husband and wife as characteristic of Reformed Protestantism, Calvin needed a nemesis on his left, a boundary, if you will, to demarcate his own reforms as not extreme or fanatical, not seditious, and always faithful to the government despite its opposition to Catholic abuses. Following the Affair of the Placards, the German Peasants' War, iconoclastic controversies, and the Münster rebellion, "those Satanic Anabaptists" served Calvin's political maneuvering before the French monarchy in order to convey his own theology as balanced, nuanced, and always in service to the crown. In addition to his nemesis of the Catholic Church on his right, Calvin searched for a worthy opponent to label, even caricature and demonize, and most importantly to differentiate himself from on his left. The Anabaptists, cited by the king as rebels, were Calvin's obvious choice.

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CHAPTER 9

Confessions, Conscience, and Coercion in the Early Calvin

John L. Thompson

However radical or innovative the Reformation may have been in its doctrine of justification or in its ecclesiology, it is commonly supposed that the Reformers did not wish to renegotiate Christianity's credal core. Evidence of one sort might be inferred from the presence of the Apostles' Creed as a standard component of Protestant catechesis.[1] Still, it's a rare generalization that does not fray at its edges. Certainly, in his 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin presented himself as firmly in the camp of Nicene orthodoxy.[2] But the following year saw Calvin caught in circumstances that suggested some diffidence regarding both the form and substance of the Nicene Creed – circumstances that also exposed some ironies, if not inconsistencies, in his notion of how confessions ought to function. On the one hand, salvation by grace through faith frees the sinner's conscience from the bondage of fear and guilt, as well as from the burden of "human traditions." On the other hand, Calvin recognized, for a church to function decently and in order,[3] one could not fairly claim membership and yet refuse to avow the very confession of faith on which the church's identity rested – even if that confession were, technically, not God's inspired word but rather a product of human wordsmiths, an artifact of human tradition.

This essay will explore some documents from Calvin's early years in order to map his developing thought on the intersection of conscience and coercion. These writings promise a glimpse of Calvin's thought at a time when he was much in transition: as newly-hired in Geneva, soon-to-be fired from Geneva, on temporary assignment in Strasbourg – these are well-known details. But Calvin was no homebody during these years: he participated in an abundance

1 Examples abound where the Apostles' Creed is either affirmed in passing or expounded in detail in the course of confessions and catechesis, including Luther's catechisms (1529), the Acts of the Bern Synod (1532), Calvin's catechisms (both 1537 and 1545), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and many more. Protestant confessional documents not infrequently affirm also the Nicene Creed and sometimes the Athanasian Creed.

2 See n. 43, below.

3 The phrase derives from 1 Cor. 14:40, of course, but is also echoed by Calvin's *Institutes* and throughout the several documents to be treated here.

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of colloquies, synods, and quasi-diplomatic missions throughout the regions of Vaud, Neuchâtel, and Bern. The Reformation had few assured successes in these years, in any of these regions, and Calvin's own mix of fragility and conviction emerges in a variety of ways, not least in his vexed and all-too-public encounters with Pierre Caroli in Lausanne and Bern.

The tale of how Caroli accused Calvin and Farel of Arianism at the Synod of Lausanne has been regularly rehearsed, most notably and at length by Edouard Bähler in 1904.[4] But only in the 1970s did a copy of Caroli's late attack on Farel and Calvin surface,[5] and that work received a critical edition only quite recently, alongside Calvin's vitriolic reply.[6] Yet, however often the story has been retold, Calvin's collision with Caroli has been retrieved for diverse reasons.[7] Some, such as Michael Breuning, have studied it for what it discloses of the balky religio-political relations between authorities in Bern and their francophone clients and allies, including Calvin.[8] Others, such as Max Engammare and Frans van Stam, have sympathetically illumined the character, utterances, and background of Caroli in order to deconstruct Calvin's attempted character assassination as well as Calvin's own foibles.[9] Richard Gamble sought to disclose something of Calvin's theological method from this encounter.[10] Gijsbert van den Brink has described the encounter with Caroli as a painful milestone

4 Eduard Bähler, "Petrus Caroli und Johannes Calvin: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Kultur der Reformationszeit," *Jahrbuch für Schweizerische Geschichte* 29 (1904): 39–167.

5 Frans Pieter van Stam dates the discovery in 1971; see "Le livre de Pierre Caroli de 1545 et son conflit avec Calvin," in *Calvin et ses contemporains: Actes du Colloque de Paris 1995*, ed. Olivier Millet (Geneva: Droz, 1998), 21. The critical edition (following note) dates the discovery in 1976.

6 COR 4/6 (2016) contains both treatises: Calvin's *Pro G. Farello et collegis ejus, adversus Petri Caroli theologastri calumnias, defensio Nicolai Gallasii* and Caroli's *Refutatio blasphemiae Farellistarum in sacrosanctam Trinitatem*, ed. Olivier Labarthe with Reinhard Bodenmann; hereafter cited as Calvin, *Defensio* and Caroli, *Refutatio*.

7 The literature on Calvin and Caroli is substantial; especially full bibliographies can be found in Nijenhuis and Engammare (nn. 9 and 20, below), and Van Stam ("Le livre de Pierre Caroli"), as well as in COR 4/6. See also Wulfurt de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* (expanded edition; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 158–60.

8 Michael W. Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground: Conflict and Reform in the Pays de Vaud, 1528–1559* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005).

9 Max Engammare, "Pierre Caroli, véritable disciple de Lefèvre d'Etaples?" in *Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples (1450?–1536): Actes du colloque d'Etaples, les 7 et 8 novembre 1992* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995), 55–79; Van Stam, "Le livre de Pierre Caroli."

10 Richard C. Gamble, "Calvin's Theological Method: The Case of Caroli," in *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag* (Fs. Wilhelm Neuser; Kampen: Kok, 1991), 130–37.

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marking Calvin's growing appreciation for the classic creeds.[11] Brannon Ellis has correlated Caroli's denunciations with Calvin's distinctive trinitarian formulations – with a dissenting reading voiced, most recently, by Gary Jenkins.[12]

I hope to do something else. My interest centers on what the episode and Calvin's other writings from that moment might tell us about how he thought confessions ought to function in an era when conscience was supposedly free from human tradition and authority in matters of faith and belief. To this end, I will linger less over the details of the Caroli debacle than over the arguments and distinctions Calvin made in cementing the reform at this time. This essay is part of a larger study of Calvin's approach to confessions and confessing, and while I hope to expose many strands of his thinking in these years, loose ends will certainly remain for further study. Many items of interest derive from Calvin's later writings, including significant texts in sermons and commentaries, as well as in his anti-Nicodemite treatises, but these cannot be considered here. My focus will be almost exclusively on three short documents produced during Calvin's abortive tenure in Geneva, from 1536 to 1538.

1 Calvin's Encounter with Caroli

We begin with a few details of Caroli and the 1537 Synods of Lausanne and Bern. While it is generally conceded that Calvin's 1545 account of his dealings with Pierre Caroli over the course of eight years is less than fair and far less than calm, Caroli himself had no strong claim on a stable temperament, much less on stable beliefs. Indeed, one might regard Caroli as one of the most thoroughly converted Christians in the first half of the sixteenth century, at least in terms of quantity if not so much of quality. A promising cleric, he was welcomed to the ranks of Sorbonnist theologians in 1520, only to be turned out of that elite group as early as 1523 under suspicion of evangelical or "heretical" preaching, likely influenced by his association with Briçonnet and Lefèvre d'Etaples at Meaux (from 1522), where he also would have become acquainted

11 Gijsbert van den Brink, "Calvin and the Early Christian Doctrine of the Trinity," in *Restoration through Redemption: John Calvin Revisited*, ed. Henk van den Belt (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 15–30.

12 Brannon Ellis, *Calvin, Classical Trinitarianism, and the Aseity of the Son* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Gary W. Jenkins, *Calvin's Tormentors: Understanding the Conflicts that Shaped the Reformer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 28 n. 51.

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with Farel.[13] Yet even as he sought to regain his standing with the Sorbonne, Caroli's reformist views persisted. Called by Marguerite d'Angoulême to a position at Alençon, he fled France in 1535 following the Affair of the Placards. So it was odd, to say the least, that he was tapped to defend the Mass at a dispute in Geneva, in June of that year. Not only did his side lose, he himself subscribed then and there to the Reformed articles.[14] By spring 1536, Caroli had secured a pastoral position in Neuchâtel, and from there he participated in the Lausanne Disputation in October[15] – evidently representing Reformed views so well that the Bernese authorities rewarded him with the pastoral oversight of Lausanne, despite the prior presence of the younger Pierre Viret.[16]

Did success spoil Pierre Caroli? In fact, Caroli's enjoyment of ecclesiastical prestige was all too palpable, and with too much self-assurance, early in 1537, he began to teach that prayers for the dead are useful – not to free them from purgatory, but to hasten the day of Christ's return.[17] Confronted by Viret and then by Calvin, Caroli mounted his own offensive, accusing Viret, Calvin, and Farel of *Arianism* – and this, as Engammare notes, is "the best-known and most widely-noted aspect of the quarrel," one of two aspects to which we will shortly return.[18] It took two synods – in Lausanne in mid-May and in Bern at the end of May, attended by hundreds of ministers – to condemn Caroli and mostly vindicate Calvin, Farel, and Viret.[19] Before the week was out, Caroli fled, eventually to Lyon, where he finagled a papal pardon. We can only marvel that he resumed preaching justification by faith, was banished from France, and by July 1539 had persuaded the Reformed ministers of Neuchâtel and, later, in Strasbourg, to forgive his relapse into Catholicism – an error he would nonetheless repeat the following summer, marking his final self-identification no longer as merely a reformist Catholic but, by 1545, as an orthodox, heresy-hunting Romanist,

13 Engammare, "Pierre Caroli," 59–62. See also James K. Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 65–71.

14 Pithy summaries of the Dispute de Rive may be found in Engammare, "Pierre Caroli," 62 n. 114; Farge, *Biographical Register*, 68–69; and Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground*, 138 n. 16.

15 The Lausanne Disputation of 1536 is not to be confused with the synods held in Lausanne in May 1537.

16 Engammare, "Pierre Caroli," 63–64.

17 Engammare adds precision to what Caroli was teaching about such prayers ("Pierre Caroli," 65–67).

18 Engammare, "Pierre Caroli," 68.

19 Van Stam, "Le livre de Pierre Caroli," 22–23.

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eager to unmask and extirpate the so-called *Farellistes* – among whom, unsurprisingly, he would number John Calvin.[20]

2 Creeds, Confessions, and Subscription in 1537

The grounds that Caroli had adduced for Calvin's trinitarian defects seem to have been the apparent reticence of Calvin and Farel to use the terms *Trinity* and *person* in describing God's nature. It was true: both the "Instruction and Confession" just published for Geneva and Farel's *Summaire*, revised in 1534, did avoid those terms – even if Calvin's 1536 *Institutes* manifestly did not omit them.[21] As Engammare explains, "In their desire to establish a biblical theology, Farel and Calvin had little or no use for the term 'Trinity,' which, as everyone knows, is not found in the Bible."[22] Nonetheless, as early as a February meeting in Lausanne with commissioners from Bern, Calvin had underscored the references to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the new Genevan confession as proof of his own orthodoxy. But to no avail, for Caroli interrupted Calvin: "Away with new confessions, we should rather subscribe to the three creeds (*tribus symbolis*)!" – namely, the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian. Calvin retorted that "we have pledged our faith (*fidem*) to the one God, not to Athanasius, whose creed (*symbolum*) no legitimate church has ever approved."[23] Soon thereafter, he told Caspar Megander, leading minister of Bern, that when Caroli insinuated that Calvin's faith would remain under suspicion until he subscribed the Athanasian Creed, Calvin himself had countered that he was not in the habit of taking anything to be God's word "unless duly considered."[24] Yet Calvin's

20 These and later developments are helpfully narrated by Willem Nijenhuis, "Calvin's Attitude Towards the Symbols of the Early Church During the Conflict with Caroli," in *Ecclesia Reformata. Studies on the Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 73–96; also by Farge, *Biographical Register*, 69–70. Caroli's *Refutatio Blasphemiae Farellistarum* would appear in 1545, as would Calvin's pseudonymous reply.

21 Engammare, "Pierre Caroli," 68; Nijenhuis, "Calvin's Attitude," 79.

22 Engammare, "Pierre Caroli," 68–69. Nijenhuis attributes Farel's omission of these terms to his desire to avoid scholastic speculations ("Calvin's Attitude," 79).

23 "Cum exciperet Calvinus ea lege nos edere in praesens ejusmodi confessionem, ut fidem nostram bonis omnibus, dum opus foret, luculentius approbare parati essemus, – 'Facessant, inquit, novae confessions, ac tribus symbolis potius subscribamus!' Ad haec Calvinus nos in Dei unius fidem jurasse respondit, non Athanasii, cujus symbolum nulla unquam legitima ecclesia approbasset." See the letter from the pastors of Geneva to the pastors of Bern, 20 Feb 1537 (in Herminjard, *Correspondence* 4:183–87, #610).

24 Calvin to Megander, around 20 Feb 1537 (in Herminjard, *Correspondence* 4:189, #611): "Ne sic quidem conquievit, sed nos sibi suspectos fore pronunciavit, donec in Athanasii

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bold narrative hardly masks his anxiety: rumors were already spreading that these French reformers' theology was not sound.

If Calvin's occasional reticence to employ technical trinitarian terms such as *Trinity* and *person* represents one point of interest for our study, his refusal to subscribe to the Athanasian Creed is a second. Resisting Caroli's demand might evince the sort of contrariness commonly provoked by people who are pushy, insecure, and querulous – as Caroli surely was. So Calvin's reluctance to sign "the three symbols" might reflect merely his indignation at being patronized by a man twice his age. Some weight is given to this explanation even by Nijenhuis, who devotes nearly half of his essay on Calvin's attitude toward the early creeds to this question of Calvin and subscription. But Nijenhuis dismisses several suggestions, including that Calvin's refusal was in defense of "liberty of conscience" (against J.T. McNeill); rather, "the reformers were not primarily concerned with the freedom of the human conscience … but with the freedom of the Word of God. They thought more in terms of the church than of the individual."[25] Neither was Calvin inflexibly demonstrating his independence or devaluation of tradition (against August Lang and François Wendel). And while Calvin worried about the sort of "tyranny" that might be represented by forced subscription, in this case, at least – we know this from Calvin's pseudonymous *Defense* of Farel in 1545 – Nijenhuis thinks it overreaches to suppose that Calvin was repelled by Caroli's "legal" use of creeds that were properly regarded as spiritual instruments (against J. Koopmans).[26] For Nijenhuis, Calvin sought not to resist the creeds themselves, whether regarded as embodying the value of patristic consensus or of their testimony to the teachings of Scripture, but rather to oppose a "superstitious" attachment to the creeds as fixed or external forms.

Without dissenting from Nijenhuis at this point, I think it will be useful to revisit the ironic contrast, noted by many (Nijenhuis included), between Calvin's refusal to subscribe to the well-known "three symbols" and his demand that

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symbolum a nobis subscriptum esset. Rcspondi, me non solere quidquam pro Dei verbo approbare, nisi rite expensum."

25 Nijenhuis, "Calvin's Attitude," 88.

26 Nijenhuis, "Calvin's Attitude," 88–90. Eight years later, Calvin would enumerate two reasons for not complying with Caroli's request: partly to resist the "tyranny" of binding the faith to fixed words and syllables when there was already more than sufficient agreement on its substance, but even more to wrest from Caroli his "mad arrogance." See Calvin, *Defensio* (COR 4/6:91.4–9): "Quod autem illis uti in Confessione supersederunt, et Carolo importune urgenti negarunt se usuros, ad id duabus causis movebantur. Nolebant enim consensu suo approbare tyrannidem hanc, ut, cum de re satis superque constaret, fides verbis aut syllabis esset alligata. Sed praecipua ratio illis fuit, ut furioso homini eam jactantiam eriperent, quam ipse animo et spe praesumpserat" (cf. also 82.15).

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the newly-minted Geneva Confession be subscribed, publicly, by all Genevans who wished to partake of the Lord's Supper. Many details of Calvin's conflicted agenda can be discerned by analyzing three documents, as mentioned above, namely: the *Articles concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva* that Calvin and Farel presented to the city council in mid-January of 1537, not long before the French *Instruction* (catechism) would appear[27] and also before the Caroli affair blew up; second, the *Confession of the Genevan Preachers* (sometimes cited as the *Confession on the Trinity*) that Calvin and his colleagues submitted to synods at Lausanne and Bern in May and June 1537; lastly, the preface to the 1538 Latin edition of the Geneva catechism that had appeared in French just one year earlier.

2.1 *The Articles of January 1537*

Although questions linger over when the first French *Instruction* or *Catechism* was written and published, the *Articles concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva* are explicitly dated as having been received by the council on January 16, 1537.[28] There is, to be sure, an open argument over whether the *Articles* represent the work of Calvin or Farel, or even their collaboration, but at the very least they surely approximate Calvin's own views.[29]

Despite the *seigneurs'* rather mixed reception of the *Articles*, the document's detailed proposals make it very clear that, on the eve of the Caroli affair, Calvin

27 The question of dating is widely taken up, including by De Greef, *Writings*, 107–9, but also by Anette Zillenbiller's brief introduction to the *Instruction et Confession de foi donc on use en l'eglise de Geneve* in COR 3/2:xii, with additional sources cited there. Although precise dating is not urgent for this study, a different sort of confusion may arise from these documents' titles. The 1537 French "catechism" is titled *Instruction et Confession de foi*, but this is not the same as the so-called "confession of faith" that was "extracted" for popular use and subscription later that year (see below, n. 60); moreover, the Latin translation of 1538 will be titled *Catechismus seu Christianae Religionis Institutio* – risking confusion with the 1536 *Institutes*. I will cite the *c.* 1537 French catechism as Calvin's *Instruction*; the 1538 Latin translation as *Catechismus*; and the extracted confession as *Confession*.

28 Text in OS 1:369–77, ET by J.K.S. Reid in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, LCC 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 48–55. According to the *Annales* (CO 21: col. 206), the *Articles* had been delivered to the council by Farel on November 10, 1536, which suggests that Calvin and Farel had been working on them throughout that autumn. Albert Rilliet suggests that the council's two-month delay in giving full consideration to the *Articles* may represent the time it took to finish the promised catechism; see his "Notice historique," in *Le Catéchisme Français de Calvin*, ed. Albert Rilliet and Théophile Dufour (Geneva, 1878), xxii.

29 The debate is recapped by Frans Pieter van Stam, "Die Genfer Artikel vom Januar 1537: aus Calvins oder Farels Feder?" *Zwingliana* 27 (2000): 87–101, who argues in favor of Farel on stylistic and personal grounds.

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had freshly rehearsed his thoughts about the appropriate role of a confessional document and the necessity of formal subscription. Two observations are worth noting.

First, it's not unfair to characterize two of the four demands – for the discipline of excommunication and for catechism – as driven by a preoccupation over the *purity* with which the Lord's Supper simply must be observed. Michael Bruening has argued for a transference of metaphor by which Calvin's concern for the purity of the sacrament of the Lord's body becomes a concern for the purity of the church as the body of Christ, but it is difficult to support that conclusion in 1537, when Calvin is explicitly concerned to avoid "soiling and contaminating" not the church or those who commune, but the Supper per se – because such contamination would also "blaspheme and dishonor" Jesus Christ.[30] Nonetheless, the Eucharist does drive Calvin's quest for discipline, with all the ecclesial apparatus that would entail, including the establishment of a consistory and the implementation of catechism.

A second point follows hard on the first, namely, that both discipline and catechism are described in terms scarcely distinguishable from subscription and public confession. No quarter is given here for exceptions or scruples of conscience.[31] Discipline is *necessary* for the church's integrity; indeed, "it is *necessary* that those who have the power to frame regulations (*police*) make it a *rule* (*ordre*) that they who come to this communion be *approved* members of Jesus Christ."[32] The words emphasized here are strong terms, and Calvin is seeking nothing less than an apodictic ruling. But his quest to mandate subscription to the Genevan confession is more than implied: he worries openly about those who might approach the Lord's table while still harboring vices or, worse, with papal "superstitions" in their hearts – but, he has an idea.

30 Calvin, *Articles* (OS 1:771, 372; LCC 22:50, 51). Breuning makes his case with reference to these same passages in *Calvinism's First Battleground*, 160–62, cf. 259–61. The centrality of the Eucharist for Calvin's working definition of "church" in these *Articles* is starkly enunciated by Herman A. Speelman, *Calvin and the Independence of the Church* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 66: "There are times when 'church' is in fact used as a virtual synonym for 'Lord's Supper community.'" Speelman goes on to argue (85–88) that Calvin's quest to have the city's inhabitants swear adherence to the Genevan confession was as a defense of the purity of the Lord's Supper.

31 This, despite the evidence that some Genevans were worried very early on about making the city's confession binding on their consciences; see e.g. Rilliet, "Notice historique," xiii, lxii.

32 Calvin, *Articles* (LCC 22:48, 50, emphasis mine); cf. OS 1:372: "Il fault doncq que ceux qui ont la puissance de fayre ceste police mettent ordre que ceux qui viennent en ceste communication soyent comme approuuez membres de Iesuchrist."

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Addressing the *seignures*, Calvin cheerfully reports that "we have thought of a remedy," namely,

> that all the inhabitants of your city have to make confession of and give reason for their faith, in order to recognize those in harmony with the gospel.... It would be then the act of Christian magistrates if you, Gentlemen of the Council, each for himself, would make in your council a profession, by which it would be shown that the doctrine of your faith is really that by which all the faithful are united in one Church.[33]

By all accounts, the effort to implement mandatory confession and profession did not go well, even though this act was supposed to take place only once, presumably as a way of formally launching the reform in Geneva, much as such plenary oath-taking had occurred in Basel and Bern.[34] But Genevans were not keen to submit to these new French clergy: there were protests, and the newly-elected council was not supportive of Calvin and Farel – neither of whom would have known this outcome in advance.[35] So it's not surprising to see their hopes for compulsory adult profession extended also to children: for catechism in this document is not merely the instruction of children – it is also the means whereby they too "make a confession of their faith to the church." Catechism is "a formula of witness" whereby children can attest their faith in a way they could not do when they were baptized as infants. Calvin spells out the general principle in the clearest terms:

> Scripture has always joined confession with faith; and it has told us that, if we truly believe with the heart, it is right that we ought also to confess with the mouth to that salvation which we believe. Now if this ordinance has ever been proper and appropriate, it is more than ever necessary now, in view of the neglect of the Word of God which we see in most people....[36]

In brief, no one who "truly believes," parent or child, has any reason to shirk from public avowal of the confession that Calvin crafted for the church in

33 Calvin, *Articles* (LCC 22:53; OS 1:374–75).

34 De Greef, *Writings*, 108.

35 Amédée Roget reports that the city's *dizeniers* began visiting neighborhoods to secure residents' subscription at the end of April 1537, and that murmurs of discontent quickly followed, with a formal complaint to the Council by mid-May. Signs of the murmuring and recalcitrance would continue for the balance of Calvin and Farel's tenure; see Roget, *Histoire du peuple du Genève* (7 vols.; Geneva: 1870–87), 1:35–63.

36 Calvin, *Articles* (LCC 22:54; cf. OS 1:375–76).

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Geneva, and to this end he entreated the city council to make it happen, to demand a confession of the faith of Geneva under pain of disciplinary excommunication. Calvin saw nothing optional here. Confession was a necessity.

2.2 *The Confession on the Trinity of May 1537* (*with Its Postscript*)

In February, Caroli's accusations of Arianism came to Calvin and his colleagues as a surprise. But Calvin was better prepared for the May synods, arriving with a new confession in hand. The document was titled simply *Confession of the Genevan Preachers*, which Beza later elaborated as "Calvin's Confession on the Trinity in Response to the Calumnies of P. Caroli."[37] The work is arguably a concise but fierce articulation of trinitarian orthodoxy. The heart of the work anathematizes a rogues' gallery of heretics, ranging from anthropomorphites, Manichaeans, and Marcionites, to Arius, Macedonius, Sabellius, Apollinaris, and Nestorius. Moreover, the *Confession of the Genevan Preachers* showcases the full range of technical Nicene vocabulary – almost. Curiously, while trinitarian relations and distinctions are in full view, the word *Trinity* is nowhere to be seen; and while the document is quick to side with the "ecclesiastical writers" in affirming "three *hypostaseis* or subsistences" within the utter simplicity of God's one essence, there are no *personae*, no three persons, on this stage.[38] Given that these omissions in Farel's *Summaire* and in Calvin's *Instruction* were the likely provocations for Caroli's attack, why would Calvin make the same mistake twice? Marc Vial strongly suspects that Calvin was covering for Farel, but even Calvin's stubbornness had to yield to the displeasure of the Bernese authorities: at yet another gathering in Bern, the following September, Calvin added a codicil that has gained as its title, "On the words *trinitas* and *persona*."[39]

The strategic omission of these terms not only hints at Calvin's distinctive doctrine of the Trinity; it also discloses something of Calvin's mind with respect to the ethics of public confession, which is my interest here.[40] And

37 The critical text is in now in COR 3/2:145–52, edited by Marc Vial. An abridged text is also in COR 4/6:73–81, because it was embedded within Calvin's *Defense* of 1545; see Vial's remarks at COR 3/2:135–36. The original confession quickly became attached to two extremely short essays, *De voce trinitatis et de voce personae* and *De Christo Iehova*, the latter of which was likely in circulation at the synods of May–June, while the former emerged at a synod in Bern later that fall; see Vial's remarks at COR 3/2:126–27.

38 Calvin, *Confessio Genevensis Praedicatorum* (COR 3/2:146.13–15): "una cum ecclesiasticis scriptoribus in simplicissima Dei unitate sentimus has esse tres hypostases in subsistentias, quae tametsi una essentia constent, non tamen inter se confunduntur." My translation follows a variant reading, which seems to correct *in*, above, to *id est*.

39 Vial, introduction to *Confessio Genevensis Praedicatorum*, COR 3/2:128–29.

40 Vial credits Jill Raitt ("Calvin's Use of Persona," in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser [Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984], 273–87), for explaining Calvin's

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to this end, the *Confession of the Genevan Preachers* is of even greater interest for the way it begins and the way it ends. Its first paragraph eloquently acknowledges the fecklessness of the human mind whenever it attempts to imagine God with its own paltry powers rather than under the guidance of Scripture. Calvin therefore avows that this confession will "*seek* God nowhere except in his Word, *know* nothing of God except with his Word, and *say* nothing of God except through his Word."[41] To be sure, it might sound as if Calvin's confession is likely to be a pastiche of Bible quotes, but that proves not to be his goal, as he then makes clear:

> Let no one be indignant with us if we show restraint in composing a confession that we want approved by all the pious – one that is diligently conformed to the proper norm of Scripture, not patched together from a mishmash of human pleasantries.... After all, if a confession of religion is nothing other than a testimony of the faith that is inwardly understood, that it be solid and sincere, it behooves us to seek it in the pure sources of Scripture – yet neither do we want to accept only a confession that is superstitiously stitched and woven solely from the words of Scripture. Rather, we contend that it ought to be composed with words that have their meaning constrained by the truth of Scripture and that as much as possible are free from the harshness that might offend godly ears or attach something to God that is unworthy of his majesty.[42]

Although Calvin properly describes here what could be regarded as his own private confession, occasioned by the need to exonerate himself and his colleagues from the taint of heresy, his words also deliver a twofold and more general lesson. Namely, faithful Christian confessions ought to stick as closely as possible to the words and concepts of Scripture; but, at the same time, it's

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preference for *subsistentia*, but he also notes Irena Backus's oral comment that Calvin's early usage is still in flux; see COR 3/2:128 n. 19.

41 Calvin, *Confessio Genevensis Praedicatorum* (COR 3/2:145.8–9), emphasis mine.

42 Calvin, *Confessio Genevensis Praedicatorum* (COR 3/2:145.16–19, 20–28): "Nemo ergo nobis succenseat, si Confessionem quam piis omnibus volumus approbatam ita moderamur, ut non ex variis hominum placitis consarcinata, sed ad rectam Scripturae normam diligenter exacta sit.... Iam si religionis confessio nihil aliud est, quam conceptae intus fidei testificatio, ut solida sit et sincera, ex puris Scripturae fontibus petitam esse oportet. Neque vero confessionem duntaxat eam recipimus, quae ex solis Scripturae verbis superstitiose contexta sit et consuta, sed iis verbis conscribendam esse contendimus, quae et sensum habeant intra Scripturae veritatem limitatum, et quam minimum habeant asperitatis, qua piae aures offendi queant, nec Deo quidpiam affingant sua maiestate indignum."

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possible to stray into a "superstitious" use of biblical terminology that ultimately distorts the Bible's meaning or misses it altogether.

Did the *Confession of the Genevan Preachers* fulfill these criteria? Yes and no: clearly Calvin felt free to invoke non-biblical terminology, including hypostasis, essence, subsistence, and so on – yet not Trinity or person. Why balk at these two? Was it because Caroli was present in May and June, and Calvin hoped for vindication of his earlier refusal to invoke these terms at Caroli's beck and call? The accusations should have been dismissed: everyone, including Caroli, must have known that the terms were defended in Calvin's 1536 *Institutes*.[43] But if Calvin's hope was to hold the proud line in the sand that he'd drawn against Caroli in February, he was to be disappointed. Caroli, of course, fled the scene in early June, and that would count as a win by default. But Calvin and his colleagues had not satisfied their critics in Bern and even elsewhere[44] – and that is why this confession has come down to us with two late codicils. For the omission of *trinitas* and *persona* was unacceptable not merely to the captious Caroli, but just as much or more to the Bernese, as well as to several other reformers who were clearly disturbed by the reticence of Farel and his new assistant to embrace the classic creeds. However, of the two supplements, it is the September addition about *trinitas* and *persona* that is especially suggestive of how, on this occasion, Calvin did not fully turn his own theory into practice.

Despite the possible lapse of three months between the confession and its postscript, the later lines address familiar themes – but with attitude. Calvin's exasperation is scarcely cloaked by his terse affirmation that, yes, *trinity* and *person* are indeed suitable words for the church to use, and he and his colleagues are "so far from abhorring them" that they freely embrace them – "just as we have always done, even before now."[45] Calvin surely did not enjoy being

43 The terms appear in a concentrated passage in the second chapter, "De Fide" (OS 1:70–73), and it seems likely that Calvin mined this chapter for both themes and phrases employed in the 1537 *Confession of the Genevan Preachers* as well as in its postscript on the Trinity.

44 To be sure, Farel's *Sommaire* had triggered anxious reactions well before now: Berthold Haller had written as much to Heinrich Bullinger as early as 1534, and Caroli had mentioned his own worries about Farel to Simon Grynaeus late in 1535; see Nijenhuis, "Calvin's Attitude," 79. So it is no surprise that these old rumors were revived by the synods at Lausanne and Bern, and that Calvin told Gyrnaeus of his own anxieties, based on worried letters recently received from Myconius and Capito, that "a bad opinion of us" was being spread "throughout all countries." See Calvin to Gyrnaeus, [May 1537] (CO 10: col. 108, Bonnet 1:56).

45 Calvin, *Confessio Genevensis Praedicatorum* (COR 3/2:151.2–11): "Quoniam voces istas Trinitatis et personarum plurimum Ecclesiae Christi commodas esse intelligimus, quo et vera Patris et Filii et Spiritus distinctio clarius exprimatur, et contentiosis controversiis melius occurratur, ab iis usque adeo non abhorremus, ut libenter eas amplexemur, sive ex

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called on the carpet, nor would he appreciate that even his allies failed to understand why a catechism might be better off without these technical and nonbiblical terms. His original confession was blunt: to obsess with using only biblical words would be "superstitious,"[46] a word for which Calvin has a score of synonyms, all pejorative. Now, however, Calvin was constrained to specify what ought to have been clear enough already: that *shunning* extra-biblical terms is also a form of superstition.

Has Calvin just admitted that he and Farel had acted superstitiously when *they* avoided these terms, including in the original text of the *Confession of the Genevan Preachers*? Surely not in his own mind, but the awkward retraction stands all the same. Calvin goes on to assure his Bernese colleagues that he will be vigilant in this matter going forward, but his promise here, in the final three sentences, is complicated, equivocal, and politic:

> But if anyone should be so bound by confused beliefs that he does not dare to use these [words] freely, even though we attest that we do not approve this sort of superstition, we will not fail in our concern for the needed correction. Yet because there does not appear to us to be sufficient cause [to justify] why a man should be repudiated who is otherwise pious and inwardly in agreement with us in our beliefs (*in eandem religionem*), within those limits we will bear with his ignorance on this point, lest we cast him out of the church or brand him as if he were thinking wrongly about the faith. At the same time, we will not take it amiss if the pastors of the Church of Bern do not support admitting to the ministry of the Word those whom they may have discovered to hold these words in contempt.[47]

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aliis audiendae, sive a nobis usurpandae sint. Itaque quod antea semper a nobis factum est, in posterum nos quoque operam daturos, quoad licebit, recipimus, ne earum usus in Ecclesia nostra aboleatur. Nam neque ab iis in scriptis vel in enarrationibus Scripturae, in concionibus ad populum, abstinebimus ipsi et alios docebimus ne superstitiose refugiant."

46 Superstition is a major motif throughout the *Institutes*, ingredient to Calvin's indictment of human foolishness, idolatry, and false religion; see especially *Institutes* (1559) 1.4.

47 Calvin, *Confessio Genevensis Praedicatorum* (COR 3/2:151.12–21): "Si quis autem praepostera quadam religione teneatur, quominus libere usurpare ipsas ausit, quanquam eiusmodi superstitionem nobis non probari testamur cui corrigendae non sit defuturum nostrum studium, quia tamen nobis non videtur haec satis firma causa, cur vir alioqui pius et in eandem religionem nobis sensu consentiens repudietur, eius imperitiam hac in parte eatenus feremus, ne abiiciamus ipsum ab Ecclesia, aut tanquam male de fide

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Isn't Calvin taking back with one hand what he just gave with the other? Having been called on the carpet by the ministers of Bern, Calvin has capitulated by emphatically endorsing the use of *trinitas* and *persona*, even if he thinks they are sometimes pedagogically inept. But before he ends, he carves out a hypothetical exception, to the effect that should he and his colleagues find a Christian in their churches who has a scruple over these or similar terms, they will by no means expel or stigmatize him. Of course, if the Bernese wish to frame a harsher policy, they are free to do so, especially with respect to those who preach. But Geneva remains free, too.

The strange and segmented *Confession of the Genevan Preachers* offers a case study not only in Calvin's theology, but also in his formal thinking about confessions. Clearly, Calvin felt constrained, early in the Caroli affair, to compose this confession as a preemptive defense of his trinitarian orthodoxy that nonetheless asserted his right *not* to be bound by the traditional but non-biblical words *trinitas* and *persona*. But by the time the original controversy came to a formal end in September 1537, Calvin found himself constrained in another way, effectively coerced to make a public confession not on his own terms – and indeed, the overall document ends not only with the literal, signed subscription of Farel, Calvin, and Viret, but also the counter-signatures of Capito, Bucer, Myconius, and Gyrnaeus, who attested that "this profession and explanation … ought to satisfy the churches of Christ."[48] One might therefore wonder if Calvin has been force-fed with a formula of his own design: to have had to sign a confession not perfectly to his liking when he had good reasons – scruples, perhaps – leading him to resist.[49] At the same time, Calvin has also made room for those scruples in his own future practice – in Geneva, at least, if not in Bern.

2.3 *Preface to the Latin Edition of the Geneva Catechism, March 1538*

Early in 1538, Calvin published a Latin edition of the Geneva Catechism. The text is quite close to the French version of a year earlier, but with a new and

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sentientem notemus. Neque interim maligne interpretabimur, si Bernensis Ecclesiae pastores eos ad Verbi ministerium admittere non sustineant, quos compererint voces istas aspernari."

48 *Confession of the Genevan Preachers* (COR 3/2:152.21–24).

49 Van den Brink goes so far as to wonder if "the synod of Bern provides us with an example of successful discipline. For here, a young theologian … who had displayed a somewhat liberal attitude towards the existing confessional documents allows the ecclesial community to correct him, is summoned to acknowledge the lasting significance of the classical concepts, and gradually becomes wholeheartedly convinced of their value"; see "Calvin and the Early Christian Doctrine of the Trinity," 18. I think Calvin's closing lines undermine such a conversionist reading.

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substantial preface in which Calvin explains that the Latin translation was undertaken "that the sincerity of that faith [of the Church of Geneva] may be manifest also to other churches everywhere."[50] The strategic character of the preface is attested by Engammare, who characterizes it as supplying what the French catechism "forgot" – namely, explicit references to *trinitas* and *persona*.[51] In fact, the initial momentum of Calvin's preface is largely about damage control in the wake of the Caroli affair – and yet it is equally, by turns, an apologetic work in defense of mandatory credal subscription in Geneva.

Caroli's ghost haunts this work. We know from the correspondence of Calvin and others that rumors of Calvin's suspect orthodoxy were not quickly dispelled, even after the supposed vindications of June and September in Bern.[52] We know this also from the preface itself, which, as propaganda on behalf of the Genevan reform and its personnel, displays an understandable bipolarity. On the one hand, Calvin enthuses over the new Latin version as a public "specimen of our beliefs," a truly "catholic testimony" and a tangible "pledge" of "the purity of our religion." Indeed, Calvin implies that this catechism is so solid, so centrist, that it ought to encourage "all churches to embrace one another in mutual love."[53] On the other hand, if a leitmotif of the previous year's confession for Lausanne and Bern was the peril of *superstition*, now the pervasive danger is *suspicion*. Calvin constantly looks over his shoulder, hoping readers will cut him some slack: after all, the original catechism was formulated with less concern for "keen and lofty learning" than for its "pious fluency." Without naming Caroli, Calvin excoriates the deviousness, ungodliness, wicked living, and shameful falsehoods of "that man" (*ille*) and laments his lasting effects – sinister but unproven rumors, the poison of false charges, the inextinguishable fire of suspicion raised against the beliefs of the Genevan pastors – all of which Calvin attempts to dispel with this retort: "As if," he writes,

> our opinion concerning the distinction of persons in the one God harbored some measure of disagreement with the orthodox consensus of the church! … Nevertheless, we recognize that there [in the Scriptures]

50 The new critical edition furnishes the French and Latin versions on facing pages; the text of the 1538 Latin preface appears at COR 3/2:115–21 and will be cited simply as *Catechismus* (1538). My translations have consulted Ford Lewis Battles's translation of the 1538 Latin catechism, found in I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 1–38, but I have often modified his renderings.

51 Engammare, "Pierre Caroli, véritable disciple?" 68.

52 See n. 44, above.

53 Calvin, *Catechismus* (1538), COR 3/2:116.11–21, 115.20.

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> *a Trinity of persons* in the one essence of God is more than clearly indicated.[54]

Unlike in the original text of the *Confession of the Genevan Preachers*, there is no mincing of words. This time, Calvin wants no one to miss his embrace of *trinitas* and *persona*.

But the unnamed Caroli is immediately blamed for a second rumor making the rounds – to the effect that Calvin and his colleagues are attempting to establish "a new precedent" (*novo exemplo*) by requiring that "the whole people" receive this catechism or confession with a solemn oath.[55] In fact, Caroli's own narrative, eight years later, repeatedly slams the "Farellistes" for a conspiracy of secrets and oath-taking with respect to their "new" confession (meaning the *Confession of the Genevan Preachers*).[56] But here, Calvin freely admits that Geneva's confession and catechism were indeed yoked to a requirement for public avowal – and though he credits "our Senate" for mandating that oath, he goes on to boast that "the fairness" of such an arrangement "shines forth so brightly" that it really needs no defending at all.[57]

Remarkably, the balance of Calvin's preface – easily two-thirds of the document – is then wholly taken up with precisely that "unneeded" defense, in the form of a long *apologia* for requiring explicit allegiance to a common confession. Four observations are worth registering.

First, *Calvin still regards confessional subscription to be good and necessary.* Despite his earlier refusal to subscribe the "three symbols" of the early church, despite Caroli's inquisitorial reaction, despite Calvin's reluctant capitulation to Bern's demand to affirm *trinitas* and *personae* publicly and even to do so by signing his own confession under their pressure – none of these factors has diminished Calvin's commitment in Geneva to have a confession signed by all, with exclusion from the Lord's Supper as the penalty. Indeed, Calvin's report is all too rosy: "The eagerness of the people in performing this oath was no less

54 Calvin, *Catechismus* (1538), COR 3/2:116.31–33, 117.5–6; italics mine.

55 Calvin, *Catechismus* (1538), COR 3/2:117.8–12: "Iam vero Confessionem, solemni iureiurando ab universo populo editam, non sine ratione adiungendam curavimus, nempe, ut si quopiam temerarius de hac re fuerit delatus rumor, cuius non levem auram sentire coepimus, ne (ut usu venire solet, cum res ad liquidum comperta non est) sint, qui nos quippiam novo exemplo esse admolitos suspicentur, quod Senatui nostro fuimus autores sacramenti istius exigendi, …" (see n. 57 for end of sentence).

56 See Caroli, *Refutatio*, COR 4/6:202.9–203.1 and 228.6–12 – two passages briefly discussed by Van Stam, "Le Livre de Piere Caroli," 30.

57 Calvin, *Catechismus* (1538), COR 3/2:117.12–14: "equidem facti nostri aequitatem clarius elucere arbitramur, quam ut defensione ulla, saltem apud cordatos prudentesque viros, opus habeat."

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than the diligence of the Senate in proclaiming it."[58] Given the protests and murmuring that began in May 1537 and continued until Calvin and Farel were dismissed, Calvin's account is surely an early modern instance of what would today be described as an "alternative fact."

Nonetheless, Calvin's Latin preface is impatient above all with two things: first, with any inkling that the Genevan reform could possibly be soft on the Trinity; then, with any suggestion that Geneva was wrong to demand residents not only to affirm the catechism for its doctrinal purity but also to swear obedience to the law of God, broadly considered.

The question of swearing *obedience* is a new wrinkle in the preface: not part of Caroli's brief, it appears to be a scruple raised with some encouragement on the part of the Bernese. Roget's *Histoire* reports an incident on September 19th in which one George de Lesclefs professed himself ready to swear to "certain articles of reformation" that had been ratified in Bern, but not to the Ten Commandments, "because they're hard to keep."[59] Three months later, a letter from the Council in Bern would make exactly the same point. Calvin's preface is therefore constrained to clarify the implications of this oath: because swearing allegiance to the confession, for Calvin, necessarily means more than doctrinal agreement – it means a commitment to *practice* the gospel, not just believe it.

> It is not required of humans that they seek the righteousness of the law but rather that, destitute of their own righteousness, they be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. In fact, in our Confession it is maintained that observing the divine law is impossible! Yet there are still those who openly growl that we have forced people, by means of an oath, to promise to fulfill the law, simply because they have vowed that they will keep to the Confession, which includes the law of the Lord.[60]

58 Calvin, *Catechismus* (1538), COR 3/2:118.12–15: "Quae erat postulati nostri aequitas, facile impetravimus, ut plebs decuriatim convocata in Confessione istam iuraret. Cuius in praestando iuramento non minor fuit alacritas, quam in edicendo Senatus diligentia." Cf. Battles ET, 4.

59 See Roget, *Histoire* 1:43, 43n, 61, who dates the Bernese letter as either 22 or 27 December 1537.

60 Calvin, *Catechismus* (COR 3/2:119.12–15): "Hic non exigitur ab hominibus, ut legis iustitiam consectentur, verum ut propria iustitia destituti, Christi iustitia induantur. Quin nostra Confessione continetur, observationem divinae Legis impossibilem esse. Et sunt tamen qui palam fremant, nos simpliciter populum ad promittendam legis impletionem sacramento adegisse, propterea quod se confessionem servaturos iurarunt, in qua Lex Domini comprehensa foret. Et sunt tamen qui palam fremant, nos simpliciter populum ad promittendam legis impletionem sacramento adegisse, propterea quod se confessionem servaturos iurarunt, in qua Lex Domini comprehensa foret." The placement of these

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At the same time, despite downplaying the specter of legalism or works-righteousness, Calvin's ideals frame his defense: the goal of mandatory confession is not only to protect the Lord's Supper from the ungodly and vice versa, but also to seek the general *edification*, which will be manifested "in sober fear of God, sincere piety, and unfeigned holiness of morals."[61]

Calvin's quest for edification in the Genevan church is underscored by a second observation: at this moment in the struggle to reform the church, he says, *we are at war*. To be sure, military imagery abounds in the Bible – think of Ephesians 6 and "the whole armor of God." Accordingly, Calvin is unexceptional in depicting the present conflict as an attack by Satan ("the prince of hatreds, factions, [and] divisions") on those allied with "the King of Peace," who are armed only with "God's truth" – a short but potent phrase that must be associated with the Genevans' confession.[62] But still more telling is Calvin's rejoinder to those who apparently feel that the only oath of allegiance ever required has already been fulfilled by baptism:

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remarks as prefatory to the Catechism in Latin presents a problem of its own, insofar as the 1538 *Catechismus* is much longer than the confession circulated in Geneva from late April 1536. The latter document was a booklet of 15 pages, and its title (*Confession de la Foy, laquelle tous Bourgeois et habitans de Geneve et subjectz du pays doivent jurer de garder et tenir, extraicte de Linstruction dont on use en Leglise de ladicte Ville*) indicates that it was itself "extracted" from the longer *Instruction* or catechism, even though the *Confession* is catalogued as the work of Farel, published in 1536 (http://dx.doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-5891). In a preface to the longer *Catechismus*, might Calvin have conflated these two documents when addressing what they taught about observing the divine law? The (Latin) *Catechismus* addresses the topic in greater depth and more clearly implies that "observing the divine law is impossible," as well as expounding the Decalogue in detail (COR 3/2:10–45). While the *Confession* concisely commends the divine law to Christians and points to the Decalogue (a2^{r}), the closest it comes to Calvin's words here is to say that "there remains always in us much imperfection and infirmity" (J.K.S. Reid trans., LCC 22:28) – which still might have been sufficient to provoke reactions such as that manifested by George de Lesclefs.

61 Calvin, *Catechismus* (COR 3/2:119.12–15): "Tota ergo solicitudo, vigilantia, industria, sedulitas nostra in hanc aedificationem incumbat, quam tantum succedere sciamus, quantum in serio Dei timore, syncera pietate, morumque non ficta sanctitate profectum fuerit" (Battles ET, 7).

62 Calvin, *Catechismus* (COR 3/2:119.38–120.3): "Si in principe odiorum, factionum, dissidiorum, ea est consensio, quanto nos pressius animos et copias coniungere decet, qui pro rege pacis adversus eum confligimus? Huc nos et pugnae species hortatur. Adversus Sathanae mendacia quibus armis instruimur, nisi Dei veritate?" Rilliet is thus perfectly justified in describing the Genevan confession of faith as "une machine de guerre" against the Roman church ("Notice historique," lv); cf. Speelman, *Calvin and the Independence of the Church*, 96.

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> "But in baptism," they say, "that [profession] has been made once for all." Yet everyone has defected from their baptismal profession! If they aver that the first oath of military service is sufficient for a deserter, an oath he has violated by his treachery, we will not say a word in defense of our cause. But if, on the contrary, even common sense itself dictates a different [conclusion], we are acquitted of all charges.[63]

Military desertion has never been looked on kindly. In that context, exclusion from the Lord's Supper would seem a mild punishment indeed.

Comparing the Genevan confession to an oath of military enlistment makes for stark and potent persuasion. But – our third observation – the stakes are raised still further when Calvin insists that *the required oath represents nothing less than embracing the covenant of salvation.* And here is where Calvin finally grounds his case in exegesis, after a fashion. Swearing allegiance to the city's confession, he argues, is no different from when Moses required the people, already marked by the covenant of circumcision, to enter into the covenant afresh.[64] Similar public declarations and oaths were implemented among the people by "the holy kings Josiah and Asa" when they sought to renew the covenant after periods of neglect and restore the place of God's laws and commandments; much later, Ezra and Nehemiah did likewise.[65] In each of these cases, "all the Jews bound their faith, not without oath-taking," to these conditions: to walk before the Lord, guarding the divine precepts with heart and soul.[66] Calvin's point is not subtle: anyone who objects to swearing confessional allegiance in Geneva will have to answer to Moses – and to Josiah, and Asa, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, all of whom were led by God to renew the people

63 Calvin, *Catechismus* (COR 3/2:117.38–118.1): "Id in baptismo, inquiunt, semel factum fuerat. Sed nemo non defecerat a baptismi professione. Si militiae desertori primum sacramentum, quod perfidia sua violavit, sufficere autumant, verbum pro causae nostrae patrocinio non faciemus. Sin ipse quoque sensus communis aliud dictat, omni calumnia liberamur," dissenting slightly from Battles, whose ET also omits the final sentence here.

64 Although COR 3/2:118.2–4 references Gen. 17:10–13 and Exod. 34:10–32, Deuteronomy furnishes more likely allusions for Calvin's argument: Deut. 4:13 glosses the (Mosaic) covenant as "the ten commandments," and 29:10–15 narrates precisely such an oath-bound covenantal reenactment: "You stand assembled … to enter into the covenant of the LORD your God, sworn by an oath, which the LORD your God is making with you today."

65 Calvin faithfully represents 2 Kings 23:2–3, 2 Chron. 15:12–15, Ezra 10:2–5, and Neh. 10:28–29.

66 Calvin, *Catechismus* (COR 3/2:118.18–22): "Quale enim est foedus, quod Iosias approbante Domino, suo populique nomine percussit? Nempe ut coram Domino ambularet, praecepta et testimonia et iustificationes eius custodiret in toto corde suo et tota anima: quibus conditionibus universi Iudaei fidem suam, non sine iureiurando, obstrinxerunt."

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in this way.[67] As for Calvin and his colleagues, they are merely messengers of God's covenant (*internuncii foederis*), just like Jeremiah and just like Paul – messengers, to be sure, who were also prophets and apostles.[68] No one could miss Calvin's point: confessional subscription in Geneva is not ornamental, it is no mere nicety. Rather, it ranks among the Bible's greatest turning-points of renewal and salvation.

The three observations noted so far – that Calvin has not softened his stance in support for swearing allegiance to the city's confession, with all its implications for one's conduct of life, and that to resist this public act dangerously underestimates not only the spiritual contest over one's soul but also the weighty biblical precedents – these observations culminate in a fourth: that *Calvin regards mandatory confession as a matter for the conscience, but possibly not in the way we might expect*. Certainly, Calvin is aware that no oath has any value if sworn from a conflicted conscience, even as he is aware of the damage done to sinners when consciences are wrongly instructed as to where and how to seek the freedom and peace that come only from forgiveness in Christ. Spurious rules, human traditions, externals and ceremonies – these things do more to produce "servile conformity" than Christian freedom. And that is why Calvin has to address the tension between a wrong-headed pursuit of legal righteousness and "the lawful use of freedom" that leads to genuine edification, genuine sanctification – but not by shirking the useful instruction to be gleaned from divine precepts such as the Ten Commandments.

The plight of the sinner's conscience is therefore recognized by Calvin in his preface, but only implicitly and in passing. Remarkably, the only explicit reference to the quest for a quiet and peaceful conscience serves not to address

67 Calvin, *Catechismus* (COR 3/2:118.6–7, 16–18, 31–34): "Cui iam criminationi patere factum nostrum potest, tot classicis autoribus munitum? … Qui tam inconsiderate obstrepere audent, non animadvertunt quibuscum certamen suscipiant.… Cum tot ergo Ecclesiae primoribus, cum principe omnium prophetarum Mose, cum Deo ipso desceptent, qui talem promissionis formam licentiosa maledicentia insectari sibi permittunt" (reading *desceptent* as *disceptent*, with OS 1:430 and CO 5: col. 320). Still, despite the cloud of witnesses that Calvin has summoned, Roget's wry observation is not out of place, that "the example of the Israelite people should itself have suggested to the reformer serious doubts as to the effectiveness of engagements undertaken in mass" (*Histoire*, 1:37n).

68 Calvin, *Catechismus* (COR 3/2:118.18–22): "Nos enim sumus internuncii foederis, quod Dominus dum per Ieremiam pollicetur, inviolabile fore pronunciat. Siquidem nobis mandatum est verbum reconciliationis, cuius summa est: Christum, qui peccatum non noverat, pro nobis peccati purgationem esse factum, ut iustitia Dei in illo simus." The closing allusion here, of course, is to 2 Cor. 5:18–21, where Paul describes himself as "Christ's ambassador." Battles's translation of *internuncii foedus* as "mediators of the covenant" is a bit misleading.

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the dilemma of swearing an oath to a human document such as the Genevan confession or catechism, but rather to explain why the mandate for such an oath cannot be compromised. And once again, the need for a pure celebration of the Lord's Supper drives the discussion. In this section, Calvin is clearly appealing to other pastors:

> Even though it was decreed by our senate, after the abomination of papistry had been laid low here by the power of the Word, that the city's religion would be organized in accord with the purity of the Gospel by abolishing superstitions and their instruments, nevertheless the form of the church did not yet seem to us to resemble that which the proper administration of our office would require. For whatever others may think, we certainly do not suppose that our function is confined within such narrow limits that, once the sermon is over, it's okay to take a nap, as if our job were done. Much closer and more vigilant care must be directed toward those whose blood will be demanded of us if it should perish due to our slackness. But if this worry sometimes made us anxious, truly it burned and fiercely tortured us whenever the Lord's Supper was to be distributed. Indeed, … everyone was rushing in indiscriminately and, what is more, they were devouring the wrath of God more than sharing in the sacrament of life. Yet shouldn't a pastor, too, be regarded as profaning so great a mystery, if he exercises no discrimination with respect to the one who is to be communed? We were able to obtain peace and quiet with our own consciences on no other terms, then, than that those who wished to be numbered among his people and be admitted to that spiritual and most holy table should enlist themselves in Christ's service (*nomen Christo darent*) with a solemn declaration.[69]

69 Calvin, *Catechismus* (COR 3/2:117.19–38): "Quanquam post abominationem Papismi, verbi virtute hic prostratam, Senatusconsulto edictum fuerat, ut sublatis superstitionibus, earumque instrumentis, ad Evangelii puritatem urbis religio componeretur, non dum tamen ea extare nobis videbatur Ecclesiae facies, quam legitima muneris nostri administratio requireret. Utcunque enim aestiment alii, nos certe functionem nostram adeo exiguis finibus terminatam non putamus, ut concione habita, ceu persoluto penso, conquiescere liceat. Propius multo ac vigilantiore opera curandi sunt, quorum sanguis, si desidia nostra perierit, a nobis reposcetur. Si quando autem alias nos anxios habebat haec solicitudo, tum vero acerrime urebat ac discruciabat, quoties distribuenda erat Domini coena. Quum enim multorum dubia nobis foret, et maxime etiam suspecta fides, omnes tamen promiscue irrumpebant. Et illi quidem iram Dei vorabant potius, quam vitae sacramentum participabant. Atqui an non ipse quoque pastor tantum mysterium prophanare credendus est, qui delectum in eo communicando nullum habet? Quare non alia lege pacem ac quietem obtinere cum nostris ipsorum conscientiis potuimus, quam ut

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This extended passage is remarkable for a number of things, not least for Calvin's admission that the ministry of the Word alone was not enough to fulfill the Genevan reforms.[70] But still more striking is how Calvin defends the oath of allegiance to the Genevan confession of faith not by appealing to the conscience of his flock, but by appeal to his own. Calvin may have had his doubts, but his awareness of his own quasi-prophetic and even apostolic calling was sure – as sure as his conviction that the Lord's Supper must not be profaned by the ungodly, much less by those who were still clinging to Roman Catholic superstitions. Nonetheless, Calvin's plaintive appeal for a quiet conscience is virtually a parody of the usual Protestant line, where it is the quaking sinner – not the anxious Reformed pastor – who seeks relief of conscience.[71] To this end, Calvin was more than willing to apply immense pressure to the government and the people of Geneva to subscribe this new confession, even if there were other circumstances, well-known to his recent memory, wherein Calvin himself would have refused.

3 Conclusion

The three documents surveyed here offer insights into the initial phase of Calvin's public dispute with Pierre Caroli and, in so doing, they also illumine how Calvin thought about – and tried to implement – some cherished theological convictions and ethical commitments in both his public leadership and his personal behavior. Some of these insights must be numbered among the loose ends that would need to be traced through many later writings, circumstances, and developments in order to address such topics as tradition, exegesis, and the classical creeds, as well as conscience, polity, and adiaphora. But at least a provisional summary can be offered on the matter of oaths, confessions, and conscience.

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solemni professione nomen Christo darent, qui in eius populo censeri atque ad spirituale sacrosanctumque illud epulum admitti vellent." Cf. Battles ET, 3.

70 Though he does not cite this passage, Bruening (*Calvinism's First Battleground*, 261) draws a strikingly compatible conclusion: "Discipline, in other words, was necessary because preaching was ineffective. The acceptance of discipline as a third mark of the church was a tacit admission that one of the fundamental assumptions of the entire Protestant Reformation was false, namely that the preaching of the 'pure Word of God' would shatter the Catholic Church's hold on the collective conscience of Europe by exposing its teachings as mere 'human inventions.'" A similar conclusion is drawn from Calvin's deathbed speech by Speelman, *Calvin and the Independence of the Church*, 61.

71 The crucial role of the pastor's conscience in Calvin's argument is also discussed by Speelman, *Calvin and the Independence of the Church*, 98–102.

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Over the course of an extended year, from January 1537 to March 1538, Calvin displayed an impressive mood-swing of attitudes regarding confessional subscription. He tenaciously campaigned for all residents to swear an affirmation of the *Genevan Confession* and embrace as well its implications for moral reform and for observance of basic divine precepts (such as the Ten Commandments). While clearly aware of the correlations between conscience and faith, and between conscience and Christian freedom, and despite signs of reluctance from laity and leaders in Geneva, Calvin left no place for scruples in the Genevan oath-taking. That degree of rigor is all the more surprising, given that the Genevan *Catechism* (both French and Latin) and the excerpted Genevan *Confession* share similar paragraphs addressing human traditions in which a legitimate freedom of conscience is defended. However, all three also repeat this line, more or less:

> The ordinances that are necessary for the internal discipline of the Church, and belong solely to the maintenance of peace, honesty and good order in the assembly of Christians, *we do not hold to be human traditions at all*, in as much as they are comprised under the general command of Paul, where he desires that all be done among them decently and in order.[72]

One can fairly conclude, then, that the *Confession* that began circulating through the districts of Geneva late in April 1537 was, in Calvin's eyes, just this sort of ordinance: necessary for the discipline of the church and, thus, not a human tradition at all – and, thus, not eligible for conscientious dissent. As Calvin had said in the *Articles* of January 1537, the Bible always joins confession with faith, and such an ordinance has never been more necessary than now.[73] For Calvin, confessional subscription truly was a case of conscience – *his* conscience, as one called to the ministry of proclaiming the Word and protecting the Sacrament.

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72 Calvin, *Confession* §17 (LCC 22:30); for equivalent paragraphs in the French and Latin Catechisms, see COR 3/2:106–7. The wording here closely resembles §14 of the Tetrapolitan Confession, but that confession goes on to itemize as part of such ordinances the more trivial rules listed in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14. Timothy R. Scheuers traces the rhetoric of such human-yet-divine traditions in other Reformed confessions prior to Calvin in "Citizen's Oath and Confession of Faith in Reformation Geneva, 1536–1538: Necessary, Indifferent, or a Tertium Quid?" (presented at the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference, Albuquerque, NM, November 2, 2018).

73 Calvin, *Articles* (LCC 22:54; cf. OS 1:375–76); see the discussion above, at n. 36, for full quotation.

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Such rigor at home could only prove perplexing when Calvin, defending himself outside Geneva, modeled a degree of indulgence and generosity toward his own conscience and his own confessional practice that he did not extend to the populace of Geneva. That hypothetical case of the man with trinitarian scruples – the case with which Calvin concluded his brief postscript on *trinitas* and *persona* – that case is therefore all the more puzzling, at least if we believe that Calvin had anyone in mind other than himself. But perhaps he did not. Perhaps that hypothetical case was really an exercise in veiled self-justification. Or perhaps it was plea for understanding, and in that sense even a modest olive branch, extended (at most) halfway toward Bern.

In any case, the exile of Calvin and Farel would bring an end to their experiment in demanding credal subscription among the laity – at least, in this particular form. And while Calvin's return to Geneva in 1541 would not see him trying to reinstate credal subscription, his commitment to ecclesiastical discipline and his understanding of pastoral authority remained essentially unchanged. Indeed, Calvin's decision not to reinstitute credal subscription among the laity was surely driven by political prudence, for the practice just as surely remained in his toolbox, to emerge many years later, in 1558, when Calvin would once again pen a confession on the Trinity, customized, so to speak, for controversies that had emerged among Geneva's Italian congregation.[74] But that is another loose end and a story for another time.

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74 Remarkably, on that occasion, in May 1558, Calvin tells of how he actually *encouraged* everyone in the Italian congregation to state any objections or scruples about the proposed confession, and he implies that such objections were extensive. Nonetheless, he also alleges that he was able fully to resolve those scruples. It's hard to say whether Calvin's accommodation to these objectors was also merely politic, or if he was learning to recognize the difficulties entailed in demanding absolute and unqualified subscription. See Calvin to Vermigli, 22 May 1558 (CO 17: col. 176, #2874; Bonnet 3:422–23); and Calvin to the Marquis de Vico, 19 July 1558 (CO 17: col. 257, #2919; Bonnet 3:442–43).

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CHAPTER 10

John Calvin and the First Eucharistic Controversy

Amy Nelson Burnett

The first eucharistic controversy was over before the young John Calvin (1509–1564) became associated with the evangelical movement in France. At the Marburg Colloquy of October 1529, the Wittenbergers and the Swiss agreed to cease attacking each other's position on the Lord's Supper. Although theologians would continue to discuss the sacrament privately and local conflicts would occasionally break into the open, there was a genuine lull in the public debate over Christ's corporeal presence in the bread and wine initiated by the pamphlets of Andreas Karlstadt (1486–1541) in 1524.

Calvin would play a central role in the second eucharistic controversy that began almost three decades later. In 1552 the Lutheran pastor Joachim Westphal (1510–1574) published an attack on the Consensus Tigurinus, the 1549 agreement on eucharistic doctrine between Zurich and Geneva. His *Hodgepodge of Confused and Mutually Contradictory Opinions on the Lord's Supper, Drawn from the Books of the Sacramentarians* provoked Calvin to respond and so touched off a debate that stretched over the next several years.[1] It is clear that Calvin made use of Swiss contributions to the first controversy in his defense of the Consensus Tigurinus, but he became familiar with some of those writings only after entering into his exchange with Westphal.[2] This raises the question: what could he or any other young evangelically-minded French humanist have known about the eucharistic controversy in the early 1530s? And more particularly, what does Calvin's discussion of the Lord's Supper in the first edition of the *Institutes* tell us about his own knowledge of that conflict?[3]

1 *Farrago Confvsanearvm et inter se Dissidentivm Opinionum De Coena Domini* (Magdeburg, 1552); Joseph N. Tylenda, "The Calvin-Westphal Exchange: The Genesis of Calvin's Treatises against Westphal," *Calvin Theological Journal* 9 (1974): 182–209.

2 Amy Nelson Burnett, "Exegesis and Eucharist: Unexplored Connections Between Calvin and Oecolampadius," in *Calvinus Pastor Ecclesiae: Papers of the Eleventh International Congress on Calvin Research,* ed. Herman J. Selderhuis and Arnold Huijgen, Reformed Historical Theology 39 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 245–60.

3 Calvin's eucharistic theology has been examined in great detail, but most studies take a systematic rather than a developmental perspective, and those that do look at the development of Calvin's thought have not considered the impact of the first eucharistic controversy on the first edition of the *Institutes*; see Thomas J. Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God: The Development of Calvin's Eucharistic Teaching* (New York: AMS Press, 1995) and Wim Janse,

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1 What Was It Possible to Know?

Awareness of the eucharistic controversy outside of German-speaking lands was shaped by three factors: the language in which the debate was conducted, the genres in which the issues were discussed, and the stage of that debate at the time each work was published. These factors profoundly affected the manner in which it was conveyed to an international audience.

Language was the first barrier to familiarity with the controversy outside of Germany. Karlstadt's eucharistic pamphlets were written in the vernacular, as were most of the works written in response to them. This includes the most important and influential of them, Martin Luther's (1483–1546) two-part *Against the Heavenly Prophets,* published at the turn of 1524/1525. Karlstadt targeted his pamphlets at the common people, to show them that they had been led astray by "the old and new papists" – Catholics and Lutherans – to believe something that was not only false but that endangered their souls.[4] It was therefore necessary for Karlstadt's opponents to write in German for the common people as well. Luther warned them against the "fanatics" who overturned the correct relationship between spiritual and material things, who did not understand the true purpose and use of the Lord's Supper, and who listened to reason rather than to Scripture.[5] Likewise, the Augsburg preacher Urbanus Rhegius (1489–1541) published a German *Warning Against the New Error of Dr. Andreas von Karlstadt Concerning the Sacrament*.[6] Luther and his supporters hoped to stomp out the flames of controversy before they spread, and so they wrote in German, which meant their works would not be accessible to French readers.

This does not mean there was no debate in Latin, however. From the beginning, the Swiss reformers Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) and Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531) chose to spread their new understanding of the Lord's Supper in Latin. Zwingli was very much aware of the dangers of publicly

"Calvin's Eucharistic Theology: Three Dogma-Historical Observations," in *Calvinus Sacrarum Literarum Interpres: Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research*, edited by Herman J. Selderhuis, Reformed Historical Theology 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 37–69.

4 See Karlstadt's introduction to *Von dem widerchristlichen mißbrauch des herrn brodt vnd kelch* (Basel, 1524), a1v–a2r; Amy Nelson Burnett, ed., *The Eucharistic Pamphlets of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*, Early Modern Studies 6 (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2011), 205–6.

5 For a summary, Amy Nelson Burnett, *Karlstadt and the Origins of the Eucharistic Controversy: A Study in the Circulation of Ideas*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 69–71.

6 *Wider den newen irrsal Doctor Andres von Carlstadt des Sacraments halb warnung* (Augsburg, 1524); W^2 20: 110–32.

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advocating a position long condemned by the church as heretical. As he himself admitted, the publication of Karlstadt's pamphlets forced him to explain his own view of the Lord's Supper and to clarify his differences with Karlstadt, especially regarding his understanding of Christ's words, "this is my body." But Zwingli chose to publish his views in Latin, in the form of a letter to the Reutlingen pastor Matthaeus Alber.[7] That letter circulated in manuscript for four months before it was printed in March 1525, at the same time as Zwingli's *Commentary on True and False Religion*, a lengthy defense of evangelical teaching dedicated to the king of France. The *Commentary* contained a section on the Lord's Supper that repeated the main arguments of the letter to Alber.[8]

Zwingli certainly appreciated the need to appeal to the common man and woman. Both the *Letter to Alber* and the section of the *Commentary* on the Eucharist were quickly translated into German with his approval. But it was clear to the Zurich reformer that if he were going to overturn traditional belief in Christ's bodily presence in the elements, he needed to start with the intellectual elite, the international community of scholars and theologians involved in discussions of doctrine. While Zwingli held that belief in Christ's corporeal presence was erroneous, unlike either Karlstadt or Luther he did not see it as a matter affecting one's salvation, and so it was not so urgent that his writings on the topic be directed first and foremost to the common people.

Johannes Oecolampadius shared Zwingli's view concerning the importance of addressing the Latin-reading elite. Influenced by Hussite arguments against transubstantiation, Oecolampadius had rejected Christ's corporeal presence in the elements by early 1523, and so before the Zurich reformer, but according to his own testimony he discussed his views only within a small circle of like-minded men.[9] He first made his position public in the summer of 1525 in his Latin treatise *On the Genuine Exposition of the Lord's Words, "This is my Body," According to the Oldest Authorities*.[10] In that work Oecolampadius drew liberally on his knowledge of patristic texts to defend a figurative understanding of the words of institution. Martin Bucer (1491–1551) was likewise conscious of his international audience. His *Apology in which he Renders Account of His Faith and Teaching Concerning Christ's Supper* (1526) was a rebuttal of Johannes

7 *Ad Mattaeum Alberum … de Caena Dominica, Epistola*; ZW 3: 335–54, with reference to Karlstadt at 335–6.

8 *De vera et falsa religione commentarius;* section on the Eucharist in ZW 3: 773–820.

9 Ernst Staehelin, ed., *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads, zum vierhundertjährigen Jubiläum der Basler Reformation*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 10, 19 (Leipzig: Heinsius, 1927–34), 1: 547.

10 *Ioannis Oecolampadii De Genvina Verborum Domini, Hoc est corpus meum, iuxta uetustissimos authores, expositione liber* (Strasbourg, 1525).

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Brenz's (1499–1570) *Epistle on the Words of the Lord, "This is my Body."* Bucer charged Brenz with presenting to foreign nations a picture of Bucer and the entire Strasbourg church as contentious and guilty of twisting Scripture, disturbing the peace, and mocking their Christian brethren.[11]

These publications of the Swiss and south German reformers touched off a public debate in Latin. The first Lutheran response was that of the Wittenberger, Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558), in his *Open Letter Against the New Error*, which contained a very brief summary of Luther's understanding of the Supper based on key Scripture texts.[12] In an exchange of letters printed in early 1526, both Theobald Billikan (1490–1554) of Nördlingen and Urbanus Rhegius of Augsburg rejected the various understandings of "this is my body" proposed by Karlstadt and the Swiss reformers.[13] Willibald Pirckheimer (1470–1530), meanwhile, published a *Response* to Oecolampadius' treatise a few months later.[14] Even more important was Brenz's *Syngramma on the Words of the Lord's Supper*, which attributed Christ's corporeal presence to the power of the word that was joined to the elements.[15] Zwingli and Oecolampadius each responded to their opponents, and the Basler's treatises aimed at Pirckheimer and Brenz would be particularly influential due to their lengthy discussion of broader issues of biblical exegesis, patristic authority, and sacramental theology.[16]

At least some of these treatises circulated outside of Germany. Oecolampadius' *Genuine Exposition* provoked responses from Josse Clicthove (1472–1543), a member of the theology faculty in Paris, and from John Fisher (1469–1535), the bishop of Rochester in England. Johannes Cochlaeus (1479–1552) sent a copy of Pirckheimer's *Response to Oecolampadius* to Fisher as well.[17] Zwingli's

11 *Apologia Martini Bvceri, qva fidei sua atque doctrina circa Christi Caenam … rationem simpliciter reddit* (Strasbourg: Herwagen, 1526), 5r–v; cf. Johannes Brenz, *Epistola de verbis Domini: Hoc est corpus meum*, in *Correspondance de Martin Bucer*, Martini Buceri Opera Omnia Series 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1979–), 2: 39–45.

12 Johannes Bugenhagen, *Contra Novvm Errorem, de sacramento Corporis et Sangvinis Domini Nostri Iesv Christi Epistola* (Wittenberg, 1525); the pamphlet was also published in German translation, W² 20: 500–6.

13 Urbanus Rhegius and Theobald Billikan, *De verbis coenae dominicae et opinionem de varietate* (Augsburg, 1526); German translation in W² 17: 1547–70.

14 Willibald Pirckheimer, *De vera Christi Carne et vero eius Sanguine ad Ioannem Oecolampadium Responsio*, in Emil Reicke et al., eds., *Willibald Pirckheimers Briefwechsel* (Munich: Beck, 1940–2009) 6: 80–85, 435–502. Hereafter WPBW.

15 Syngramma clarissimorum qui Halae Suevorum convenerunt virorum super verbis cenae dominicae ad Johannem Oecolampadium; Johannes Brenz, Werke. Eine Studienausgabe (Tübingen: Mohr, 1970–86), 1/1: 234–78.

16 On these debates, see Amy Nelson Burnett, *Debating the Sacraments: Print and Authority in the Early Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

17 WPBW 6: 203–7, no. 1054.

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Commentary on True and False Religion was dedicated to the French king and was read in French evangelical circles.[18] Underlying Bucer's concern for the international reputation of the Strasbourg church was the negative reaction of French exiles in Strasbourg, including Gérard Roussel and François Lambert, to the outbreak of the eucharistic controversy.[19] It is difficult to judge how widely any of these Latin treatises might have circulated in France in the later 1520s, however, let alone how easy it would have been for Calvin to obtain them.

More importantly, even if Calvin read any of these early treatises while he was in France, they would have given him only a partial picture of the debate. By the fall of 1526 that debate was shifting into the vernacular, so readers unable to read German could not follow its further development. This is particularly true of works by the Wittenbergers. As Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) rather patronizingly pointed out to Calvin many years later, the Frenchman could not possibly know Luther's true position because he could not read the reformer's German works.[20] Luther's 1527 treatise *That These Words of Christ Still Stand Firm* and his *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, written the following year, were not translated into Latin. Bugenhagen's 1528 *Public Confession Concerning the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood* was the only lengthy Latin work by the Wittenberg circle published after 1527 that was a direct contribution to the inner-evangelical debate over Christ's bodily presence.[21]

The second factor affecting awareness of the controversy outside of Germany was the types of works in which the Lord's Supper was discussed. In addition to the pamphlets chiefly concerned with Christ's bodily presence, there were three other types of publication in Latin that addressed the topic of the Lord's Supper. The first group consisted of works on the sacrament written for one purpose but published by others to support their own particular understanding. These included medieval works, such as John Wyclif's *Trialogus,* published by Karlstadt's supporter Otto Brunfels (1488–1534), and the treatise of the ninth-century scholar Ratramnus of Corbie on the Lord's body and blood, published by the Zurich reformers, as well as the treatise of Ratramnus' contemporary Paschasius Radbertus and those of Lanfranc of Canterbury and Guitmund of Aversa written against Berengar of Tours that were published by Lutheran

18 Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 151.

19 On these French refugees, Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and her Evangelical Network* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 341–5.

20 Bullinger provided Calvin with brief translations from Luther's works; Bullinger to Calvin, 24 Oct. 1554, CO 15: 274–6, no. 2034.

21 Johannes Bugenhagen, *Publica de sacramento corporis et sanguinis Christi confessio* (Wittenberg: Lufft, 1528).

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and Catholic editors.[22] Intended largely to uphold the editors' position, these medieval treatises were antiquated and contributed little to the raging debate. More significantly, this group included Latin translations of Luther's works on the sacrament written before the outbreak of the eucharistic controversy. The most important of these were the translation of his 1523 treatise *On the Adoration of the Sacrament* and the fourth volume of Bucer's translation of Luther's *Postilla,* both published in 1526. To Luther's great indignation, Bucer added to his translation two prefaces in which he defended Oecolampadius and Zwingli and set forth his own understanding of 1 Corinthians 10:1–4, a key text in the debate over the Eucharist. The volume therefore presented readers with Luther's view of the Lord's Supper, but it was countered by that of Bucer. Bucer's express purpose in translating Luther's postil was to make it available to an international audience, and the volumes were dedicated to evangelically-minded brethren in France and Italy.[23]

A second group of publications was comprised of broad presentations of evangelical teaching that included a discussion of the sacraments. The two most important of these were Philipp Melanchthon's (1497–1560) *Loci Communes* and Zwingli's *Commentary on True and False Religion*, but neither was a suitable guide to the discussion of the Lord's Supper in the early 1530s. Melanchthon's *Loci* was written in 1521, not only three years before the outbreak of the eucharistic controversy, but at a very early stage in the Reformation, when the Wittenbergers were first formulating an evangelical understanding of the sacraments. The emphasis on promise and sign in the *Loci* reflected a view of the sacraments also prominent in the works of Luther and Karlstadt from 1521, but that view virtually disappeared from Wittenberg discussions of

22 For a helpful overview of the ninth century debate, see Celia Chazelle, "The Eucharist in Early Medieval Europe" in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ian Levy, Gary Macy, and Kristen Van Ausdall (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 205–250. For more specialized studies, see Owen Michael Phelan, "Horizontal and Vertical Theologies: 'Sacraments' in the Works of Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus of Corbie," *Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 3 (2010): 271–289; Otten Willemien, "Between Augustinian Sign and Carolingian Reality: The Presence of Ambrose and Augustine in the Eucharistic Debate between Paschasiuc Radbertus and Ratramnus of Corbie," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 80, no. 2 (2000): 137–156; Mary Collins, "Evangelization, Catechesis, and the Beginnings of Western Eucharistic Theology," *Louvain Studies* 23, no. 2 (1998): 124–142.

23 Ian Hazlett, "A Pilot-Study of Martin Bucer's Relations with France 1524–1548," in *Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century Europe. Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 28–31 août 1991,* ed. Christian Krieger and Marc Lienhard, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 52–53 (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1993), 513–21.

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the sacraments after the outbreak of the eucharistic controversy.[24] Zwingli's *Commentary* also contained a very early formulation of the Zurich reformer's position. Its polemic against the Mass was essentially that developed already in 1523 in his *Exposition of the 67 Conclusions* from the first Zurich disputation. The argument in the *Commentary* against Christ's bodily presence in the sacrament was still fairly superficial, consisting chiefly of the claim that Christ's words of institution should be understood as "this signifies my body."[25] There is, for instance, no discussion of Christology, which would assume a major place in Zwingli's understanding of the sacrament by 1527. For both Melanchthon and Zwingli, the eucharistic controversy would lead to the development and deepening of theological positions far beyond what was contained in these two early works.

The final group consists of biblical commentaries that included discussions of the Lord's Supper, whether as part of the institution accounts in the synoptic Gospels and 1 Corinthians or related to Christ's discourse on his flesh as the bread of life in John 6.[26] Fundamental to this enterprise were Erasmus's editions of and annotations on the Greek New Testament as well as his paraphrases of the individual books of the New Testament published between 1517 and 1523 and printed together from 1523.[27] Although these works predated the eucharistic controversy, they would be used by all later contributors to that debate. Philipp Melanchthon's annotations on John appeared in 1523, Johannes Brenz and Martin Bucer published commentaries on the same Gospel in 1527 and 1528 respectively, and Johannes Oecolampadius's lectures on John from 1529–30 were published posthumously in 1533.[28] Bucer's commentary on the synoptic Gospels was first published in 1527, and a slightly revised version that

24 For a description of early Wittenberg discussions of the Lord's Supper, see Amy Nelson Burnett, *Karlstadt and the Origins of the Eucharistic Controversy: A Study in the Circulation of Ideas*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11–35.

25 *Auslegen und Gründe der Schlußreden*, ZW 2: 111–9; *Commentarius*, ZW 3: 773–820.

26 The only commentary on 1 Cor. to be published before 1530 was that of Melanchthon from 1521 – again, very early in the development of evangelical sacramental theology.

27 On the chronology of the printing of the paraphrases, see Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974–), 42: xx–xxix.

28 Oecolampadius' lectures on Matthew also appeared posthumously in 1536, but the Basel reformer had only reached Matt. 10 before his final illness; Ernst Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk Johannes Oekolampads*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 21 (Leipzig: Heinsius, 1939), 574, 583–4. Zwingli's lectures and sermons on the New Testament were published only in 1539; Walter E. Meyer, "Die Entstehung von Huldrych Zwinglis neutestamentlichen Kommentaren und Predigtnachschriften," *Zwingliana* 14 (1976): 285–331. On the publication of Melanchthon's commentaries, see Timothy J. Wengert, *Philipp Melanchthon's Annotationes in Johannem in Relation to its*

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also contained the commentary on John appeared in 1530. Melanchthon's 1521 commentary on 1 Corinthians was among the very first evangelical Bible commentaries, while Bullinger's commentary on that Epistle was published in 1534, the same year Calvin left France for good. Although the primary purpose of each commentary was to explain the Scripture text, there was also opportunity for the development of theological controversy. This was particularly true of Bucer's commentaries, which combined explanation of the Scripture text with *loci* discussing the theological implications of that text and addressing current controversies. Bucer's *locus* on baptism in his synoptics commentary, for instance, rejected the definition of a sacrament set forth by the Wittenbergers, while his discussion of John 6 was a direct criticism of Brenz's discussion of that passage in his John commentary published the previous year.[29]

These commentaries were significant for the dissemination of competing views on the Lord's Supper. The commentaries were less likely to be identified and rejected out of hand as heretical by official or unofficial censors, which made it easier for them to penetrate international markets. The commentary format gave each author the greatest scope for arguing that his understanding of the Lord's Supper resulted from the correct exegesis of Scripture. Because their primary purpose was to explain Scripture, these commentaries were bought and studied by scholars who might not otherwise read works related to the eucharistic controversy.

Finally, as has already been implied, one must consider at what stage in the debate over the Lord's Supper each of the above-mentioned works was written. Evangelical discussion of the sacrament evolved significantly over the period 1518–1529, with different emphases emerging in Wittenberg and Switzerland even before the outbreak of the eucharistic controversy. In the early years of the Reformation, the discussion centered on the sacrifice of the Mass and the purpose of the sacraments. The beginning of the eucharistic controversy at the end of 1524 led to a major change in orientation of the discussion of the Lord's Supper. Karlstadt argued that one could not prove from Scripture that the elements were changed into Christ's body and blood; he and Zwingli proposed differing understandings of Christ's words of institution to defend a symbolic interpretation of the sacrament. Oecolampadius was the first to develop the older Wyclifite/Hussite argument that Christ's body must be in heaven and

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Predecessors and Contemporaries, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 220 (Geneva: Droz, 1987), 31–48.

29 August Lang, *Der Evangelienkommentar Martin Butzers und die Grundzüge seiner Theologie*, Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche 2/2 (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1900), 242–5.

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so could not be under the forms of bread and wine, and he cited an array of church fathers to demonstrate that his figurative understanding of the words of institution was not an innovation but had been taught in the early church.[30] Over the next two years these arguments were further refined and others were added, so that later discussions of the sacrament were much more detailed and sophisticated than those from the early years of the controversy.

It should be noted that of all the commentaries mentioned earlier, only those of Brenz, Bucer, Bullinger, and Oecolampadius from the later 1520s and early 1530s could draw on the arguments employed in the pamphlet war waged between 1525 and 1527. The difference between works written in the earlier and later stages of the debate could be quite striking. In his discussion of the Lord's Supper in his 1534 commentary on 1 Corinthians, Bullinger defended Zwingli and Oecolampadius, but the language, tone, and content of the passage had little in common with Zwingli's earliest works on the sacrament. In fact, by the early 1530s the position advocated by Zwingli at the outset of the controversy, that the Supper was *only* a memorial of Christ's death and a public testimony of one's faith, had been modified even in Zurich, and the memorialist understanding was associated especially with Anabaptist separatists. Readers in Germany observed how the discussion of the Lord's Supper changed over time and could evaluate each contribution to that debate as it was published. The audience outside of Germany was not so ideally placed. Their access to the evolving debate was limited by the availability of works in Latin discussing the sacrament, and it was much more difficult for them to follow the evolution of the debate.

2 The Lord's Supper in the 1536 *Institutes*

Calvin probably had little opportunity to read the early Latin contributions to the eucharistic controversy while he was in France, but he surely had access to them after his move to Basel in 1534. It is all the more striking, then, that there is little indication in the first edition of the *Institutes* that Calvin was familiar with the most important treatises, including those of Basel's own reformer, Johannes Oecolampadius. There is, for instance, no association of the word "sacrament" with "mystery," the topic of the opening section of Oecolampadius' *Genuine Exposition*. Calvin did not refer to any of the church fathers cited so extensively by Oecolampadius, nor did he link the Lord's Supper to the celebration of Passover, an idea going back to Nicolas of Lyra that was taken up not

30 Burnett, *Karlstadt*, 77–101.

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only by Erasmus in his paraphrase of Luke but also in Oecolampadius' *Genuine Exposition* and Zwingli's *Subsidiary Essay on the Lord's Supper*, from the summer of 1525. One looks in vain for the Christological arguments drawn from the New Testament that were used in Zwingli's *Amicable Exegesis*, the Zurich reformer's last lengthy work in Latin devoted to the Lord's Supper.[31] Perhaps most importantly, Calvin devoted no space at all to the proper understanding of the phrase "this is my body." This fact is all the more striking because the Latin treatises from the second half of the 1520s all contained lengthy discussions concerning the proper understanding of Christ's words. It is clear from the *Institutes'* section on the Lord's Supper that Calvin did not believe the bread and wine in any way contained Christ's body and blood, but he did not specifically address the question whether "this is my body" should be understood literally or figuratively.

Calvin's awareness of the first phase of the eucharistic controversy was derived instead from the early presentations of evangelical doctrine and from Bucer's commentaries on the Gospels. This can be demonstrated from the discussion of three related topics in the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: the definition and purpose of the sacraments, the application of John 6 to the Eucharist, and the location of Christ's resurrected body. Calvin's treatment of these three topics illustrates the way the young reformer used the resources available to him to develop his own understanding of the Lord's Supper.

As alluded to above, rival understandings of the sacraments emerged even before the outbreak of the eucharistic controversy. In *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther defined a sacrament as God's promise joined to a sign and received in faith, and he cited the miraculous signs of Noah's rainbow, Gideon's fleece, and Hezekiah's retrograde shadow as biblical examples of signs that confirmed divine promises. For this reason, the sacraments could assure troubled consciences of forgiveness and strengthen faith. Melanchthon would repeat these ideas in his *Loci Communes*. In contrast, Zwingli was influenced by Erasmus' discussion of baptism as entrance into Christ's army, an analogy derived from the etymology of *sacramentum* as a military oath. Zwingli discussed this definition of a sacrament in both his *Exposition of the 67 Conclusions* and his *Commentary on True and False Religion,* where he

31 Calvin did mention the *communicatio idiomatum*, but in a very different sense than Zwingli, who reduced it to alloiosis, or a figure of speech, OS 1: 140; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), ed. and trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 105 (ch. 4.28), hereafter *Institutes* (1536); Richard Cross, "'Alloiosis' in the Christology of Zwingli," *Journal of Theological Studies* N.S. 47 (1996): 105–122.

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described the purpose of a sacrament as a public profession of faith and promise of obedience.[32] In his commentary on the synoptic Gospels, Bucer likewise compared baptism to a soldier's oath. As a consequence of this view, he followed Zwingli in arguing that external signs could not strengthen faith, and like the Zurich reformer he rejected the comparison of the sacraments with the miraculous signs of the Old Testament.[33]

Calvin demonstrated his preference for the Wittenberg understanding in the opening paragraphs of his discussion of the sacraments, where he defined a sacrament as a promise and a testimony that confirmed and strengthened faith.[34] He criticized the view of Zwingli and Bucer that genuine faith did not need any strengthening and instead followed the Wittenbergers in citing the rainbow given to Noah, the fleece given to Gideon, and the retrograde shadow shown to Hezekiah as signs given to confirm promises and so as sacraments.[35] Calvin did not completely reject the comparison of the sacraments to a soldier's oath, since it had patristic roots, but he argued that the emphasis should be placed on the commander's act of receiving soldiers into his army rather than on the soldier's act of making the oath.[36] In this way he drew attention to the actions of God rather than of humans.

Calvin did not endorse the Wittenberg understanding of the sacraments in its entirety, however. Responding to Karlstadt's eucharistic pamphlets, which argued for the priority of the Spirit, Luther emphasized that the externals of Word and sacrament came first, and the Spirit never acted apart from those externals. In his commentary on John, Brenz also argued that God worked through external means and that the sacraments effected something in the recipient because of the Word attached to them. He described the sacraments as instruments by which, through the Word, God's gifts were given to believers. These gifts included Christ's body and blood, communicated through the

32 Burnett, *Debating the Sacraments*, 57–61, 86, 100–01.

33 Discussion of Matt. 3:6, reprinted in Lang, *Evangelienkommentar*, 417–19. Zwingli rejected the miraculous signs of the Old Testament as the counterparts of the New Testament sacraments in his 1525 *Von der Taufe, von der Wiedertaufe und von der Kindertaufe*, ZW 4: 227–9.

34 OS 1: 118–27; *Institutes* (1536), 87–93; cf. the specific comparisons in Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 140–42, 148–9, 152–3, and Wilhelm H. Neuser, *Johann Calvin. Leben und Werk in seiner Frühzeit 1509–1541*, Reformed Historical Theology 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 221–31. Neuser, pp. 223–4, believes that Calvin's analogy of a document bearing a seal was a rebuttal of a similar analogy used by Bucer in his *Apologia*, but this is unlikely, for Bucer used the analogy in a different way. There is no other indication that Calvin had read Bucer's *Apologia*.

35 OS 1: 124–5; *Institutes* (1536), 92 (ch. 4.8).

36 OS 1: 122; *Institutes* (1536), 90 (ch. 4.5–6).

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bread and wine with the Word.[37] In his own commentary on John, Bucer rejected this view. God could use the external word, but the Spirit was not bound to it, nor was it the means by which Christ's body and blood were made corporeally present. Bucer argued that Brenz's position was unscriptural, and in this context he also criticized Brenz's claim that "this is my body" was a synecdoche, including both bread and body, just as one referred to a jug full of wine simply as "wine."[38] Calvin too would reject the view that "a hidden power is joined and fastened to the sacraments to distribute in them the graces of the Holy Spirit, just as wine is proffered in a cup." Here he understood Bucer's reference to the analogy of wine as referring to the instrumental nature of the sacraments without being aware of its origin in Brenz's use of synecdoche. Calvin also followed Bucer in arguing that it was the Spirit who bestowed God's grace, and the sacraments only announced God's bountiful gifts.[39]

Calvin's discussion of the purpose of the Lord's Supper was closer to Wittenberg than to Zurich, but in its use of John 6 it was also shaped by Erasmus as mediated through Strasbourg. Luther rejected the association of Christ's flesh in John 6 with the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and Melanchthon's annotations on John did not discuss the sacrament in conjunction with John 6. Oecolampadius too dissociated Christ's discourse on eating his flesh from the Lord's Supper.[40] Zwingli went even further, asserting that John 6:63 ("the flesh is of no use") meant that Christ's corporeal body and blood could not be present in the bread and wine.[41]

There was, however, another way to approach John 6, by identifying it not with the physical reception of the consecrated bread and wine but instead by explicitly associating spiritual communion with sacramental communion. In his paraphrase of John 6, Erasmus emphasized the parallel between physical and spiritual eating and the eternal life that came from the eating and drinking of Christ's flesh and blood. He identified that flesh and blood with Christ's teaching, but he also alluded to the sacrament as a "mystical symbol," which

37 Johannes Brenz, *In D. Iohannis Evangelion Exegesis* (Hagenau: Setzer, 1527), 114v–115r, 121v–124v.

38 BOL 2: 267–70.

39 CO 1: 124; *Institutes* (1536), 91 (ch. 4.7); cf. Neuser, *Johann Calvin*, 226–7, on the analogy with wine in a jug.

40 Oecolampadius pointed out that many who ate the sacramental bread did not have eternal life, and so John 6:53–4 could not refer to the sacrament; *Annotationes Piae ac Doctae in Evangelium Joannis* (Basel, 1533), 130v.

41 Amy Nelson Burnett, "Hermeneutics and Exegesis in the Early Eucharistic Controversy," in *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation: Books, Scholars and Readers in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Matthew McLean (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 85–105.

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did no good unless it was received in spirit.[42] In his commentary on John, Brenz refuted Zwingli's use of John 6:63 by arguing that the verse should be understood as requiring the spiritual eating of Christ's body along with the physical reception of the sacrament.[43] In his synoptics commentary, Bucer argued that Christ's body was not contained in the consecrated bread, but he too drew a parallel between the spiritual eating of Christ's flesh and the Supper's institution. As Christ gave bread to be eaten corporeally by the mouth, so he gave his true body to be eaten spiritually by the soul. His words concerning the bread and wine spoken at the Last Supper were intended to remind his disciples of what he had said earlier about the eating of his flesh.[44] In his commentary on John 6, Bucer likewise associated the spiritual eating of faith with sacramental eating, and he repeated his view that the Supper was an occasion when the pious truly ate and drank Christ's body and blood as they received the symbols of bread and wine.[45]

Calvin would emphasize even more strongly the spiritual eating that took place in the Lord's Supper. Underlying his discussion was the Erasmian premise that the physical objects of the Supper were to lead by analogy to spiritual things. The sacrament was called both the Lord's Supper and the Eucharist because in it Christians were spiritually fed and they gave thanks for Christ's benefits. Christ's body and blood were made present and presented to communicants in the elements of bread and wine.[46] Like Bucer, he compared the physical nourishment of bread and wine to the spiritual nourishment of Christ's body and blood. Calvin sounded like the Wittenbergers when he described the chief purpose of the sacrament as sealing and confirming a divine promise, but he changed the orientation of that promise by referring it to Christ's statement that his flesh and blood were true food and drink (John 6:55) rather than to the assurance of forgiveness. Instead of advocating a particular understanding of how Christ's body was present in the bread and wine, Calvin dismissed the "frightful dissensions" that had arisen over the question. Christ's

42 Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974–) 46: 86–8; citation at 88; on Erasmus' discussions of the sacrament, Burnett, *Debating the Sacraments*, 64–66.

43 Brenz, *In D. Iohannis Evangelion Exegesis*, 119r–120r.

44 Lang, *Evangelienkommentar*, 433–5, 441.

45 BOL 2: 263–4.

46 OS 1: 137–8; *Institutes* (1536), 103 (ch. 4.25). The verbs Calvin used, *repraesentare* and *exhibere*, have a stronger sense of presence than the English cognates *represent* and *exhibit*. Bucer also used them in a way that emphasized this stronger sense of presence: "Primum dicimus pane repraesentari Christi corpus. Quis id neget? Deinde: id ita repraesentari ut mentibus sanctorum nequaquam absens sed praesentissimum sit, sed id illis exhibente ipso Christo, non ministro," BOL 2: 270.

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body was offered in the sacrament "truly and effectively," and there was no need to discuss further the nature of that body.[47]

Nevertheless, Calvin did intervene in the controversy over Christ's corporeal presence in the elements by championing what had become a mainstay of the Swiss/South German understanding of the sacrament, the argument that Christ's body could only be in one place.[48] At the beginning of the eucharistic controversy both Karlstadt and Oecolampadius argued that Christ's body was in heaven and did not descend to earth to be present in the bread and wine. In his 1526 *Clear Instruction on Christ's Supper*, Zwingli made the further argument that it opposed the creeds of the early church to say that Christ's body, which had risen, ascended, and was seated at the right hand of the Father, was also present in the bread of the sacrament.[49] His most detailed discussions of Christology were contained in his publications from 1527, where he introduced the rhetorical concept of alloiosis to explain how verses in the New Testament should be interpreted as applying either to Christ's divine or his human nature. Oecolampadius did not adopt Zwingli's use of alloiosis but instead made an argument based more on "scientific" or natural philosophical rather than theological grounds: it went against the properties of a truly human body to say that it existed in more than one place at a time.[50]

Martin Bucer also used the nature of Christ's truly human body to argue against that body's corporeal presence in the elements. In a locus associated with John 3:13, he reminded readers that Christ was like us in all ways except sin (Heb. 2:17) in order to criticize those who claimed that Christ's body was ubiquitous, so that it could be at the same time in heaven and in the bread of the Eucharist. According to Bucer, such a claim undermined the hope that human bodies would be raised from the dead just as Christ's human body was raised (1 Cor. 15:12–14) and was a revival of Marcion's heretical teachings.[51] Bucer would add to this argument in his discussion of John 6. There he granted that all things were possible with God, but God was also true, and he had testified that his Son would be true man, with a truly human body, so that body could be in only one place at a time.[52]

Calvin would make a similar argument in his discussion of the limited nature of Christ's body. He began with an allusion to 1 Cor. 15:12–14, stating that our hope of resurrection and ascension was based on Christ's resurrection

47 OS 1: 138–40; *Institutes* (1536), 103–105 (ch. 4.25–28).

48 OS 1: 140–2; *Institutes* 1536, 104–107 (ch. 4.28–9).

49 Burnett, *Karlstadt*, 85–90; Burnett, *Debating the Sacraments*, 201–03.

50 Burnett, *Debating the Sacraments*, 154–57.

51 BOL 2: 140–142 (passage from the 1528/1530 commentaries in the critical apparatus).

52 BOL 2: 281 (passage from the 1528/1530 commentaries in the critical apparatus).

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and ascension. He then criticized those who asserted the ubiquity of Christ's body and claimed that its limitations during Christ's earthly life were due to "a certain dispensation;" this view was "to raise Marcion from hell." John 3:13 therefore could not be used to argue for the ubiquity of Christ's human body.[53] Calvin's discussion of the view held by "certain obstinate fellows" sounds like it was based on the view rejected by Bucer rather than on the argument first used by Willibald Pirckheimer.[54] In Calvin's view, the assertion that Christ's glorified body could be everywhere confused the distinction between flesh and spirit. Even after its resurrection Christ's body retained its truly human characteristics. It did not help to argue about what God could do, for the issue was what God willed to do, and that was to make Christ like his brethren in all things except sin (Heb. 2:17).[55]

The similarities between Bucer's commentaries and Calvin's discussion of the Lord's Supper are striking. None of the other commentaries had a similar impact on the young Frenchman's discussion. There is no indication Calvin used Oecolampadius' commentary on John, and his only awareness of Brenz's arguments seems to have been derived from Bucer's commentary. Likewise there is little trace of Bullinger's 1 Corinthians commentary in Calvin's discussion of the sacrament. Bullinger's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11:17–29 followed Zwingli in describing the Eucharist as a public thanksgiving instituted by Christ. Bullinger called attention to the nature of bread and wine as signs and drew a parallel with Passover as a remembrance of and thanksgiving for an event in the past. Although he too mentioned the finite character of a truly human body, his brief discussion of Christ's body focused on the patristic arguments used especially by Oecolampadius.[56]

Calvin's discussion of the sacraments in general and of the Lord's Supper in particular reflects his very careful reading of the most important early summaries of evangelical doctrine as well as of Bucer's Gospels commentaries. These, rather than the more polemical and focused treatises on the Lord's Supper from the 1520s, shaped his understanding of the sacrament in the first edition of the *Institutes*.

53 OS 1: 140–1; *Institutes* (1536), 105 (ch. 4.28).

54 *De uera Christi Carne & uero eius Sanguine, ad Ioan. Oecolampadium Responsio*; WPBW 6: 477–8.

55 OS 1: 141–2; *Institutes* (1536), 106 (ch. 4.29).

56 Heinrich Bullinger, *Theologische Schriften*, Werke, Dritte Abteilung 6 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2012), 364–5, 369–70, 372–5. Bullinger would expand on his discussion of Christ's body in the 1537 edition of the commentary, cf. pp. 369, 370–72.

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3 Calvin's Knowledge of the Early Debate

This discussion of the influences on Calvin's earliest discussion of the Lord's Supper draws attention to his larger purpose for writing the *Institutes*. As Calvin stated in his dedication to the king of France, the book was intended to present the rudiments of the faith to French readers and to prove the orthodoxy of evangelical teaching.[57] The eucharistic controversy had caused the evangelical understandings of the Lord's Supper both to develop and to diverge significantly, and the doctrinal compendia of Melanchthon and Zwingli were clearly inadequate. Calvin's own compendium was intended to replace both of the older works.

Seen in this light, it is understandable that the polemical contributions to the first eucharistic controversy were of little interest to Calvin. On purely pragmatic grounds, those pamphlets were published before 1529, and by the time Calvin's evangelical convictions were deepening in the early 1530s they may have seemed out of date. Even if he did have access to these early pamphlets, they were too narrowly focused to be useful for his larger purpose because they addressed only the question of Christ's corporeal presence in the elements. More importantly, the catechetical and apologetic purpose of the *Institutes* discouraged introduction of detailed arguments against Christ's corporeal presence. In writing a doctrinal handbook, Calvin was in constant conversation with both Melanchthon and Zwingli, whose broader summaries of evangelical doctrine were more useful than those pamphlets concerned specifically with the Lord's Supper. Bucer's Gospels commentaries also functioned as a compendium of evangelical teaching, for they combined textual exegesis with theological *loci* treating the chief articles of the evangelical faith.[58]

Neuser observed that Calvin's polemic in the 1536 *Institutes* was directed chiefly against the Zwinglians and the Catholics.[59] Aside from his debt to Melanchthon's *Loci*, there is another obvious explanation for his silence concerning the Wittenbergers' position: his relative ignorance of their fully developed understanding of the sacrament. Calvin's knowledge of the Wittenberg position was derived largely from the translations or mediation of others. The most important figure in this mediation process was Martin Bucer. Calvin was

57 OS 1: 22–3; *Institutes* (1536), 1.

58 The differences between the two commentaries printed in 1527 and 1528 and the 1530 combined edition are not significant enough to clarify which edition Calvin used. Neuser suggested that Calvin used the 1527 edition of the synoptics commentary rather than the 1530 edition, which also contained the commentary on John (*Johann Calvin*, 228, n. 223). If he is right, Calvin must have had a copy of the 1528 John commentary as well.

59 Neuser, *Johann Calvin*, 225.

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familiar with Bucer's translation of Luther's sermon on the Beatitudes, and he may have had access to Bucer's translation of Luther's postil.[60] The Strasbourg reformer was even more important as the source of Calvin's indirect knowledge of Brenz's understanding of the sacraments and as the inspiration for Calvin's relatively brief rebuttal of it. Neuser pointed out that much of Calvin's discussion of the Lord's Supper was directed against the "Zwinglian" position advocated in Bucer's commentary on the synoptic Gospels, but this must be balanced against Calvin's much more positive reception of Bucer's arguments concerning the conjunction of spiritual and sacramental eating and the nature of Christ's body in his commentary on the Gospel of John.[61] Calvin's familiarity with Bucer's early discussion of the sacraments adds another dimension to our understanding of his relationship with the Strasbourg reformer.

This examination of Calvin's familiarity with the positions developed in the early eucharistic controversy also demonstrates the commitment with which the young scholar undertook his study of the Bible and of early evangelical theology. The position that Calvin set forth in the first edition of the *Institutes of Christian Religion* was not identical with that taught in Wittenberg, Zurich, or Strasbourg, although he drew from all three schools in his discussion of the Supper. By the time the *Institutes* was printed, though, Melanchthon had published a new version of his *Loci Communes* with a significantly revised and expanded discussion of the sacraments. Bucer too published a revised edition of his Gospels commentary in 1536 that removed several of the passages that had influenced Calvin's discussion in the *Institutes*. The treatment of the Lord's Supper in both works reveals the changed priorities and the new directions taken in discussions of the sacrament after the Marburg Colloquy. From this point on, Calvin's treatment of the Supper would reflect current debates. Not until Westphal's attack would he have any reason to go back to the publications of the later 1520s to look for further arguments to defend his own position.

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60 Neuser, *Johann Calvin*, 96–9.

61 Neuser, *Johann Calvin*, 231.

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CHAPTER 11

Calvin on the Early Reformation

Barbara Pitkin

1 Introduction

Preaching a sermon on 2 Samuel 5: 13–21 to his Genevan congregation on July 1, 1562, Calvin instructed his auditors on how to profit from biblical histories by comparing them with their own experience. Speculating on why the Philistines did not press their advantage at a time when David was especially vulnerable, Calvin asserted that God himself covered their eyes and held them back. To a congregation likely packed with French refugees and others overwhelmed by the outbreak of religious warfare in France, this proclamation of God's powerful providence was meant to console and strengthen them in volatile and uncertain times. Calvin reminded them that they had experienced the same thing as David when they themselves were "so oppressed that it certainly seemed that [they] would never be able to escape." Beyond establishing this connection to the sacred history, Calvin – usually so reticent to speak about himself – cemented his lesson with a personal example from the more recent past:

> And I may say that twenty years ago, nearly thirty, I was in such distressing circumstances that I would almost have preferred to have been dead to remove all this anguish from my sight. At the least, I would have desired to have had my tongue cut out, so as never to say a word. Yet when the enemies of truth were determined to abolish it … they could not find the means. For it would have taken only a word of confession from me to have stamped out the whole doctrine of our salvation. If the true believers had been sought out one by one among the people, it is certain that they would have been recognized, and the wicked, by this means, would have been able to exterminate them. Oh, but that never came into their minds! And who prevented that? God blinded their eyes and made them like stupid brutes.[1]

1 John Calvin, *Predigten über das 2. Buch Samuelis*, vol. 1 of *Supplementa calviniana: Sermons inédits*, ed. Hanns Rückert (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), 122; English translation (occasionally modified) from John Calvin, *Sermons on Second Samuel: Chapters 1–13*, ed.

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Recalling his own experience in France in the 1530s, Calvin invited his Genevan congregation to recognize God's preservation of the faithful even when they could not see it. Indirectly, he hinted at his interpretation of the early reform movement in France some thirty years hence – portraying this as one more chapter in a long-standing conflict between embattled true believers and those he designated the wicked enemies of God.

Calvin's recollections after the fact invite comparison with some of the earliest ways of telling the story of the Reformation up through the synthetic contemporary histories that began appearing midcentury. The first and most prominent example of these accounts from the Protestant side was the controversial but best-selling *Commentaries on the State and Religion under the Emperor Charles V* by John Sleidan (1506–1566), published in Latin in 1555 but also appearing in vernacular translations.[2] In the mid-1560s, Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) wrote a history of the "change in religion and establishment of Christian Reformation" in the Swiss cantons, focusing on Zurich.[3] In the same time frame (1559–1566), John Knox (c. 1513–1572) wrote his *History of the Reformation of Religion in the Realm of Scotland*.[4] Most relevant to the French Reformation, the *Ecclesiastical History of the Reformed Churches in the French Kingdom*, attributed to Theodore Beza (1519–1605), appeared in 1580.[5] Alongside biographies of reformers and martyrologies, these chronicles telling

and trans. Douglas Kelly (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1992), 211. On Calvin's use of biblical history in these sermons to illuminate the present, see Barbara Pitkin, "John Calvin, François Hotman, and the Living Lessons of Sacred History," in *Politics, Gender, and Belief: The Long-Term Impact of the Reformation*, ed. Amy Nelson Burnett, Kathleen Comerford, and Karin Maag (Geneva: Droz, 2014), 19–44. See also Euan Cameron, "Calvin the Historian: Biblical Antiquity and Scriptural Exegesis in the Quest for a Meaningful Past," in *Calvin and the Book: The Evolution of the Printed Word in Reformed Protestantism*, ed. Karen E. Spierling, Refo500 Academic Series 25 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 77–94.

2 John Sleidan, *De statu religionis et reipublicae, Carolo Quinto Caesare, commentarii* (Strasbourg: Wendelin Rihel, 1555); Alexandra Kess, *Johann Sleidan and the Protestant Vision of History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); A.G. Dickens and John M. Tonkin, *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 10–19.

3 Heinrich Bullinger, *Heinrich Bullingers Reformationsgeschichte*, 3 vols., ed. J.J. Hottinger and H.H. Vögeli (Frauenfeld: Christian Beyel, 1838–1840). See Christian Moser, *Die Dignität des Ereignisses: Studien zu Heinrich Bullingers Reformationsgeschichtsschreibung*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Dickens and Tonkin, *Reformation in Historical Thought*, 19–21.

4 John Knox, *History of the Reformation of Religion in the Realm of Scotland* (London: T. Vautrollier, 1587).

5 [Theodore Beza], *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France*, vol. 1, ed. G. Baum and E. Cunitz (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1974). See Scott Manetsch, *Theodore Beza and the Quest for Peace in France, 1572–1598* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 139–43; see especially 139 n. 80.

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the story of reform constructed, preserved, and perpetuated memories of recent and unfolding events.

Like Calvin's allusion in his sermon on 2 Samuel 5, these publications offered evaluations at a distance, crafting memories of events and persons shaped by developments of twenty or thirty years or more. To understand more fully the scope of contemporaries' understandings of the religious changes unfolding in the sixteenth century, one might turn to forerunners of these synthetic projects, in order to see what the picture of reform was at an earlier time. These depictions present the events of 1515–1535 not from the perspective of a generation but within a decade of the events or even as eyewitnesses – when memory of the events was fresher and their outcomes more uncertain. To be sure, contemporary accounts are not necessarily less biased in their interpretations of events, but they sometimes provide either different evaluations than those that become enshrined in historiographic tradition or, alternatively, function as the seedbed for these later interpretations. Universal histories, local chronicles, correspondence, and even theological texts from 1515–1535 can be read for light that these sources shed on how authors were interpreting and evaluating recent and contemporary events; this approach opens a wider range of materials for illuminating initial perceptions and evaluations of evangelical reform.

It is this line of inquiry that guides my investigation into Calvin's relationship to the early Reformation. Like John Thompson in his contribution to this volume, I investigate several of Calvin's early writings, but with different questions in mind than are usually asked. Specifically, I analyze writings from the early 1530s that are often mined for information about Calvin's own religious evolution.[6] However, instead of inquiring into Calvin's personal religious commitments, I focus on the way he presents and evaluates – however indirectly and implicitly – the contemporary religious landscape. Along the way, I engage the findings of other chapters in this book in order to situate and trace the evolution within Calvin's views on the early Reformation.

Before turning to Calvin's writings from the early 1530s, consider one last time his sermon from the summer of 1562. While it is impossible to pinpoint the exact moment to which Calvin alludes, it is plausible that he refers to the Placards Affair of October 1534, an event frequently cast as a decisive turning point both in accounts of the early French Reformation and in Calvin's own

6 On Calvin's "conversion" and a summary of the literature on this topic, see Frans P. Van Stam, "Calvin's Conversion as His First Step Towards the Ministry," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 12/1 (2010): 43–70.

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religious biography.[7] The extent to which the event occasioned a shift in royal policy toward the French evangelicals has been debated. Mark Greengrass cautions against exaggerating its importance as a watershed, noting that "the overall pattern of the 1530s was a cyclical one of repression followed by remission."[8] In chapter three above, James Farge shows that Francis's orthodox eucharistic sensibilities ran very deep, and that his policy change from tolerating to persecuting evangelicals began nearly a decade earlier in Madrid. Jonathan Reid's work in chapter five above and more broadly on the evangelical network associated with Marguerite of Navarre challenges the idea that from the mid-1530s evangelical reform in France suffered such a great setback that reformers either abandoned the cause or gave up hope of drawing the king to their side.[9]

Certainly, the Placards Affair and its aftermath influenced Calvin's emigration to Strasbourg and then Basel and was the immediate impetus for composition of the first edition of the *Institutes*. There is no question that the experience of exile from France marked a major change in Calvin's life, opened up new career directions and paths, and came to shape his reforming activities in unique ways, not least in the development of an orientation that Heiko Oberman has characterized as a distinctive Reformation of the refugees.[10] But did this event fundamentally change Calvin's views of French evangelicalism and the reforming ideals he had come to embrace – and if so, how? And if not, *did* these views change and when? Reexamination of some of Calvin's early writings will suggest a slightly less dramatic evolution, a subtle shifting of reform priorities that only begins to manifest itself after his arrival in Geneva in the fall of 1536. From his earliest sympathetic and supportive portrayals of early French reforms and his adoption of their methods and priorities, Calvin came upon arrival in Geneva to embrace a different, harsher judgment of the

7 Wilhelm Neuser argues that that passage refers to 1532 and references it as evidence that Calvin at the time was already part of a "secret congregation" of evangelicals in Orléans or Paris *and* that the evangelical congregation was at the time too weak to survive opponents' attacks – which is why Calvin held his tongue (*Johann Calvin: Leben und Werk in seiner Frühzeit, 1509–1541*, Reformed Historical Theology 6 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009], 64–65). Even if Calvin is thinking back to 1532, to my mind the passage in the sermon tells us far more about Calvin's frame of mind in 1562 than at the time, and certainly little about the state of the French evangelical community in the early 1530s.

8 Mark Greengrass, *The French Reformation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 26–27.

9 Jonathan Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols., Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 380.

10 Heiko Oberman, *Initia Calvini: The Matrix of Calvin's Reformation* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen, 1991), 42–43. Cf. Oberman, "*Europa afflicta*: The Reformation of the Refugees," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 83 (1992): 91–111.

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approaches, character, and members of the very reforming circles that had given birth to and nurtured his own evangelical faith.

2 Calvin among the *Geraldini*, 1533–1535

Calvin's earliest extant writings stem from the early 1530s, and the earliest of these are letters or dedicatory epistles to his fellow students from his studies in Paris, Orléans, and Bourges: François Daniel, Nicholas Duchemin, François de Connan, and Claude de Hangest. At this time Calvin was also working on, publishing, and actively promoting his own literary debut, the 1532 commentary on Seneca's *De clementia*. Nothing in these early writings is explicitly concerned with religious matters or church reform. However, in them we see a young scholar networking and collaborating with young jurists and ecclesiastical officials with similar humanistic inclinations.[11] Moreover, their interests in classic texts and languages extended to religious writings as well. In a letter to François Daniel from the spring of 1532, Calvin reports that he has obtained the Bible that Daniel asked him to purchase and will bring it to him.[12] According to Herminjard, this was the 1532 reprint of Robert Estienne's 1528 Latin Bible, which was heavily criticized by Paris theologians.[13] The following year Calvin wrote to Daniel about his visit to Daniel's sister, who was in a convent near Paris. Calvin says that he inquired about her inclinations regarding her vows, noting that he had no intent to dissuade her from taking them, but rather

11 Christoph Strohm provides a rich depiction of the academic context in which these personal connections were forged in chapter four above. For details about Daniel and de Hangest and Calvin's connections to them, see Machiel A. van den Berg, *Friends of Calvin*, trans. Reinder Bruinsma (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 1–18.

12 References to Calvin's early correspondence are taken from John Calvin, *Epistolae* (*1530–sep. 1538*), series 6, vol. 1 of *Ioannis Calvini opera omnia denuo recognita et adnotatione*, ed. Cornelis Augustijn and Frans Pieter van Stam (Geneva: Droz, 2005); abbreviated hereafter COR 6/1. The letter to Daniel is found in COR 6/1: 57–59. Daniel thanks him in a letter from May 15 (COR 6/1: 69–70). See Cornelis Augustijn, Christoph Burger, and Frans P. van Stam, "Calvin in the Light of the Early Letters," in *Calvinus praeceptor ecclesiae: Papers of the International Calvin Congress on Calvin Research*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 188 (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 139–58.

13 Alexandre Ganoczy in contrast suggests that this may have been Lefèvre's French Bible but cautions that this does not mean that Calvin and Daniel "belonged to the evangelical party. Young humanists with Fabrist leanings may well have been interested in a translation by Lefèvre" (*Young Calvin*, trans. David Foxgrover and Wade Provo [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987], 74–75).

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wished to remind her to rely on God for power to fulfill them.[14] A number of interpreters have judged that this letter "contains nothing Lutheran in it, but at most reveals a profoundly religious, Fabrist spirit."[15]

Thus by 1533, Calvin was more obviously moving in evangelical circles, at a time when, as Jonathan Reid has argued, the Navarrian network reinvigorated its reforming efforts "to promote preaching, print evangelical books, and place their members in positions of power" as part of a multi-faceted endeavor by Marguerite and her allies to legitimate and advance the evangelical movement in France and cement its connections to German, Swiss, and English reform movements.[16] The highpoint of this campaign came with Marguerite's sponsorship of Gérard Roussel's enormously popular and controversial sermons, delivered at the Louvre in Lent 1533. According to contemporary accounts, Roussel not only promoted evangelical doctrines of justification by faith and scripture but also attacked or denigrated traditional understandings of good works, fasting, the cult of the saints, and the Mass.[17] This preaching episode, along with Nicholas Cop's inaugural oration on November 1, 1533, and the Affair of the Placards just under a year later, became the major flash points as defenders of traditional religious orthodoxy responded with counter-preaching, riots, arrests, and ultimately executions. Several of Calvin's writings at this time attest to his favorable evaluation of this reforming campaign and his own support for and perhaps involvement in its activities.[18] Here I focus on writings for which Calvin's authorship is indisputable and leave aside Nicholas Cop's 1533 inaugural address and the French preface to the New Testament in Olivétan's 1535 French Bible.[19]

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14 COR 6/1: 71–74. Van Stam follows Dufour in dating to June 1533; the letter is often dated to 1531.

15 Ganoczy, *Young Calvin*, 72–73.

16 Reid, *King's Sister*, 380.

17 Reid, *King's Sister*, 423. For discussion of Roussel as an irenic reformer, see Alex Schoeber, "Gérard Roussel: An Irenic Religious Change Agent" (Ph.D. diss., University of Victoria, 2013). On Roussel's eucharistic thought and its connections to Calvin's, see also Reid, *King's Sister*, 534–50.

18 These sources also provide the basis for evaluations of Calvin's religious commitments as an adherent of Lefèvrian evangelicalism (Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009], 35).

19 Debate over whether or not Calvin authored or collaborated in Cop's address is long standing; an English translation appears in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1536 Edition*, trans. and ann. Ford Lewis Battles (Rev. ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 363–72. The French preface to the New Testament has been widely attributed to Calvin, but Van Stam recently argued that it was the work of Olivétan himself (Frans Pieter Van Stam, "Der Autor des Vorworts zur Olivetan-Bibel *A tous amateurs* aus dem Jahr 1535," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 84 [2004]:

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3 Three Letters from 1533 and 1534

The first hints of Calvin's attitude toward contemporary French evangelicalism are in letters from 1533 and 1534. In a letter he wrote to François Daniel from Paris in October 1533, Calvin reports on a satirical play performed at the start of that month at the Collège de Navarre that lampooned Marguerite's evangelical sensibilities and her relationship to Gérard Roussel, provoking an investigation by the police. In addition, Calvin relates how Marguerite's anonymously-published book, *Mirror of a Sinful Soul*, was removed from bookshops, prompting inquiries from her brother, the king Francis, and the new university rector, Nicolas Cop. He details Cop's questioning of the university faculties about the matter at a meeting held on October 24. At the end, he mentions reports that the Bishop of Paris, Jean du Bellay, was given royal permission to appoint parish preachers.[20] (Du Bellay was the brother of the diplomat Guillaume du Bellay and an example of a member of the Navarrian network in a powerful position.) In a shorter letter, likely accompanying the previous one, Calvin sent Daniel an excerpt from some sermons (or writings) by Roussel, perhaps from the Lenten cycle earlier that year.[21]

There is no correspondence relating Calvin's experience of Cop's inaugural address a few days later on November 1 or the furor it evoked. But in a letter frequently dated to early 1534, Calvin appears to have left Paris and is devoting himself to his studies with the support of a patron, whom the recent editors of his early correspondence suggest is Louis du Tillet, priest and canon at Angoulême (one of Marguerite's territories) and another reform-minded churchman. Calvin weaves more explicitly religious language into this letter than in previous ones, suggesting that his retreat may be an "exile," quoting Seneca on providence, and attributing the tumultuous changes in his fortunes to the hand of the Lord.[22] If the tradition is true that around this time he visited Lefèvre at Marguerite's court in Nérac, then his affiliation with her circle is all the more evident.

In these letters to François Daniel, Calvin presents a positive image of the activities of Marguerite and her reformist associates. Roussel's sermons are prized, and the preacher himself is characterized as "our G." Marguerite is an

248–67). Neuser argues that Calvin wrote the preface to the Old Testament as well, but more relevant to and in contrast to my argument here, he claims that Calvin's authorship of the preface to the New Testament demonstrates his break with the Meaux circle's theology (*Johann Calvin*, 175).

20 COR 6/1: 75–80. See discussion in Ganoczy, *Young Calvin*, 76–80.

21 COR 6/1: 81–83.

22 COR 6/1: 92–94. See discussion in Ganoczy, *Young Calvin*, 83–84.

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"excellent woman" and "mother of all virtues and of all good learning." She decided to have the play investigated so as not to encourage further bad behavior. Cop is presented as defending her and her book against the "factious theologians" on the faculty and their spokesman, Le Clerc, who voices his concerns regarding those who would pervert the excellent person of the king and the theology faculty. Calvin's allegiances here are, as James Farge points out in chapter three above, *heterodox* when judged from the standard of the Paris theology faculty. Yet although Calvin clearly notes the tension between the factious theologians and his allies, there is no sense of an open break from Catholicism. He continues to network with his humanist friends like Daniel, reform-minded clerics like Du Tillet and possibly Roussel and Lefèvre, and evangelically-minded power brokers like Cop and du Bellay.

4 1534 Preface to *Vivere apud Christum*

Another dimension of Calvin's involvement in the endeavors of the early French reforming movement can be seen in the preface to *Vivere apud Christum* written in 1534, likely from Orléans after the Placards Affair.[23] This is Calvin's first written work on a religious topic, and though the text itself was later revised and only published in 1542 (and again in 1545 under the title *Psychopannychia*), the original preface (along with a second preface written in 1536) both appeared in the later publication. Calvin addresses the 1534 preface to an anonymous friend and explains his choice of topic and the reasons for writing. He claims to be responding to certain false ideas about the soul being spread around, which he has heard about secondhand from a friend with knowledge of those promulgating them. The evil, he claims, is an ancient one, originating outside of Christianity, but also found in the early teaching of Pope John XXII and now

23 COR 6/1: 95–100; English translation from John Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, in vol. 3 of *Tracts and Treatises*, trans. and ed. Henry Beveridge, notes by Thomas Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 413–90. For discussions, see Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin, Expanded Edition: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Lyle D. Bierma (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 151–55; Ganoczy, *Young Calvin*, 86–87. Gordon suggests this treatise provides the first insight into Calvin's thought as he emerges from French evangelicalism (*Calvin*, 43). That may well be true for the treatise itself, which, however, we must treat as reflecting Calvin's views post-1536 at the earliest. Since we cannot know how much he revised the treatise, we can only be certain that the 1534 preface reflects his views at that time. Here it seems to me that Calvin is still advancing the agenda of Fabrist reform, whereas Gordon thinks he is moving beyond this and "towards turning his back on the Catholic Church in the spring of 1534" (*Calvin*, 40).

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turned up by those Calvin designates as Anabaptists.[24] He feels compelled to speak out because of the urgency of the situation, though he aims to do so with moderation. In the present climate, however, he says that some people are so touchy that even the slightest bit of criticism has them alleging that the unity of the church is destroyed. To such a charge Calvin replies: "We acknowledge no unity except in Christ; no charity of which he is not the bond; and that the chief point in preserving charity is that faith will be kept holy and entire for us."[25] Despite Calvin's professed aim to proceed gently, Wolfgang Capito (to whom Calvin had sent a draft) advised him to postpone publication, cautioning that times are uncertain and what embattled churches really need is not the refutation of errors but the preaching of Christ.[26] Calvin also sent the draft version to Olivétan in Neuchâtel, who shared it with his colleague Christophe Fabri. Fabri, like Capito, expressed misgivings about the project.[27]

In Calvin's explicit refutation of a position he attributes to religious radicals, we can also detect his implicit defense of moderate reform. Calvin positions himself and his party as moderate and orthodox, focused on the centrality of Christ and unity and peace in the church. Though Capito found the preaching of Christ – that core activity of the Meaux Circle's reforming ideal – lacking in the treatise itself, Calvin's affirmation of the centrality of Christ is clear in the preface.[28] There is no anti-Roman sentiment in the 1534 preface. The opponents are not the institutionalized Catholic church, but rather more radical dissenting movements that Calvin views as heterodox and schismatic. Calvin, his anonymous friend, and his unnamed source are allied in their task with reformers like Capito in Strasbourg – a place with strong connections to the Navarrian network – and Olivétan and Fabri near Neuchâtel.

24 See Brian Brewer's discussion of this text and the role of Anabaptism in shaping Calvin's theology more broadly in chapter eight above.

25 COR 6/1: 100; Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, 416.

26 COR 6/1: 102–3. In the preface to the readers written in 1536, Calvin concedes that his initial version of *Vivere apud Christum* had contained some severe and harsh expressions directed at the Anabaptists (COR 6/1: 120; Calvin, *Pyschopannychia*, 416).

27 Olivétan apparently reported to Calvin that Fabri had some misgivings about parts of the treatise; Calvin responded to Fabri in a letter from Basel in September 1535 and informs him he has undertaken revisions (COR 6/1: 115–18).

28 On evangelical preaching as the centerpiece of the Meaux Circle in the early 1520s, see Reid, *King's Sister*, 262–74.

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5 Latin Preface to Olivétan's French Bible (1535)

Within months of writing *Vivere apud Christum*, Calvin found himself directly involved with Olivétan's Bible translation project and through this participated in another activity central to the French evangelical movement since the early 1520s. According to Jonathan Reid, at that time Lefèvre and his colleagues at Meaux shifted their reforming focus from clergy to the laity and "brought a new vision of 'evangelizing' the people by giving them direct access to the Scriptures in the vernacular and clear instruction based on it."[29] While providing the laity access to scripture in the vernacular was of course central to the program of German and Swiss evangelicals and inspired Lefèvre's own translation project, it was this French context that shaped Calvin's involvement in this area. His contribution to Olivètan's French Bible in the summer of 1535 represents another endorsement of the reform strategies pioneered out of Meaux and, despite some recent setbacks, still pressing forward in the first half of the 1530s.

Of course, by the time Calvin wrote his preface to Olivétan's Bible he had left France, with Louis du Tillet as his traveling companion. After a brief stopover in Strasbourg, he had settled in Basel, where he was working on his *Institutes*. During this time he also wrote the Latin preface that appears at the beginning of the French Bible published in June 1535.[30] Calvin's arguments for why the common people ought to have scriptures in the vernacular are not very original, and that's the point. Echoes can be heard throughout to the Paraclesis that prefaced Erasmus's 1516 *Novum Instrumentum* or to the preface to Lefèvre's French translation of the Gospels and the New Testament from 1523.[31] Calvin refers to the simplicity of the disciples, to the fact that God promises to teach all, and that in the ancient church, ordinary men and women had access to

29 Reid, *King's Sister*, 170. On the appearance of Lefèvre's translation and its goals, see 174–80.

30 COR 6/1: 106–13; English translation from John Calvin, "John Calvin's Latin Preface to Olivétan's French Bible (1535)," in Calvin, *Institutes: 1536*, 373–77. See Ganoczy, *Young Calvin*, 94–96. Ganoczy also discusses the French preface to the New Testament and argues that there Calvin probably criticizes, in addition to the theologians of the Sorbonne, "Briçonnet, Roussel, Daniel, Duchemin, Budé, Vatable, Danès, and … his humanist friends, the Bible scholars and moderate reformers who would not do anything that would lead them to the stake or to exile. Carried away at this time by a torrent of emotions from being persecuted for the Gospel, Calvin no longer seemed to see these humanist friends as patient artisans of a peaceful reformation but only as frightened men who were not generous but self-centered and who deserved to be reprimanded" (*Young Calvin*, 98). For insightful analysis of the preface, see Olivier Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole: Étude de rhétorique réformée* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1992), 455–59, 463–64.

31 For summaries of Lefèvre's prefaces, see Reid, *King's Sister*, 176–79.

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the scriptures. In fact, he observes, this liberty was not confined to that purer age, but existed for many years afterwards until the ordinary people became lazy and gave it up. Calvin also refutes counterarguments. He calls opponents of vernacular translations "rabbis" and opposes their purported claims that vernacular translations will lead to heresy and that ordinary people become haughty when they even get a taste of scripture. Against those more moderate opponents who think that people should be content with the Vulgate, Calvin sees only a kind of elitism that despises the Holy Spirit.

Of all the materials considered thus far, this preface clearly represents Calvin's most critical depiction of those in the institutional church who resist evangelizing the laity and providing scriptures in the vernacular. This was, of course, still the orthodox position in France, but this means only that Calvin, like his associates in Marguerite's network, was hostile to the conservative position of the Paris theology faculty and not the French church per se. There is nothing in this document to suggest that Calvin, although having left France, had rejected the reformist program of the Navarrian reformers. Rather he appears to be furthering that program, now as an expatriate collaborator in a wider evangelical network, the roots of which were planted in the latter 1520s with the emigration of Guillaume Farel and the temporary exile of Lefèvre, Roussel, and Michel d'Arande to Strasbourg in 1525–1526.[32] These connections had grown stronger again through diplomatic channels in the early 1530s.[33] As Michael Bruening notes in chapter seven above, by this time Farel had broken with his former French colleagues in reform and adopted a more polemical and confrontational approach. However, despite Farel's rejection of the Navarrian approach to reform upon leaving France, the evidence from Calvin's publications and activities up to his arrival in Basel does not suggest that *his* assessment of the early Reformation in France had dramatically changed with his emigration. From Basel he could continue to support the network's collaborative goals through his humanistic writings on behalf of reform, and with readier access to publishers.

6 Building Up and Defending the "Poor Little Church": Dedicatory Epistle to Francis I and the 1536 *Institutes*

A long tradition also ascribes to Calvin the French preface to the New Testament appearing in Olivétan's Bible, and some see in this preface a criticism of

32 Reid, *King's Sister*, 341–45.

33 For details see Reid, *King's Sister*, 436–41.

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Meaux reformers and Calvin's humanist friends like Duchemin.[34] If that is the case, Calvin certainly hid these complaints in the major work he was in the process of finalizing when Olivétan's Bible was published in June. It is possible, of course, that criticism of the French evangelicals would have been a distraction from the apologetic and catechetical aims of the *Institutes*. However, it is hard to see change in Calvin's attitude toward the Navarrian reformers in the text, nor do his actions immediately after its publication suggest he had repudiated their approach to evangelical reform. To be sure, the *Institutes* bear witness to a changed and still evolving situation, and Calvin's critique of the situation in France is heightened and subtly directed toward some new opponents. Yet after publication of the *Institutes* in March 1536, Calvin (as best we know) continued to associate himself with the international alliance linked to Marguerite. He went with Louis du Tillet to Ferrara, Italy, to the court of Marguerite's royal cousin and protegée, Renée of France, Duchess of Ferrara (1510–1574), another member of Marguerite's reforming circle.[35]

To illustrate these continuities and highlight some important new themes that emerge in this text, I focus on the dedicatory epistle to Francis I and make brief mention of the crucial section on the Lord's Supper. In the former Calvin builds a defense for political support of moderate church reform, and in the latter he addresses the hot-button issue of the day, one that the Placards Affair had made all the more pressing.[36]

Calvin begins the dedicatory epistle to Francis, dated in August 1535, by invoking themes central to the Navarrian reform. He claims his initial goal in writing was to provide a rudimentary catechetical aid for the French laity "hungering and thirsting for Christ."[37] Violent attacks on this teaching and its proponents require him not only to elucidate but also defend it, especially because his opponents – whom he variously designates as "madmen," "ungodly," "Pharisees," and "the order of priests" – have not only disturbed the peace of the realm but also seek to influence the king in this matter.[38] Calvin's appeal

34 Ganoczy, *Young Calvin*, 98.

35 On Renée, see C.J. Blaisdell, "Renée de France between Reform and Counter-Reform," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 63 (1972): 196–226. On Calvin and du Tillet, see Olivia Carpi-Mailly, "Jean Calvin et Louis du Tillet: Entre foi et amitié, un échange révélateur," in *Calvin et ses contemporains: Actes du colloque de Paris 1995*, ed. Olivier Millet, Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance 53 (Geneva: Droz, 1998), 7–19.

36 References to the 1536 *Institutes* are from John Calvin, *Christianae religionis institutio* [1536], in OS 1; English from Calvin, *Institutes 1536*. For discussion of the dedicatory epistle, see Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique*, 464–77.

37 OS 1: 21; Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 1.

38 OS 1: 21 (*furiosi illi*); 22 (*Pharisaeorum; impii*); 24 (*ordine sacrificorum*); Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 1, 2, 4.

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for the king's support may have been unrealistic, but it was entirely in step with efforts by Marguerite and her network over the past decade and a half to sway the king away from more conservative theological influences.

In the letter, Calvin posits a "poor little church" slandered and persecuted by opponents who charge it with creating social and political chaos. These adversaries advance a number of arguments against evangelical doctrine, to which Calvin responds point by point. In the first place, the opponents on the right are the same as those described in the Latin preface to Olivétan's Bible, a corrupt clerical elite opposed to religion based on scripture. However, Calvin also takes subtle aim at a new target. As Josef Bohatec showed, the arguments against evangelicalism that Calvin refutes in the letter are drawn from the French humanist Guillaume Budé's criticism of the evangelical movement and its propensity for social turmoil in *De transitu hellenismi ad christianismum*, recently published in March 1535.[39] The revival of good letters had always been a part of the platform of the early French Reformation, but Calvin here, writing from Basel in the last months of Erasmus's life, suggests that humanism does not always side with reform as he envisions it.

As the circle of opponents has expanded, so too has Calvin's depiction of the Reformation as a moment in history, only hinted at in the earlier texts we considered. As Reid has noted, from early on the Navarrian network understood the present moment of reform as a new historical phase.[40] In the Latin preface to Olivétan's Bible, Calvin distinguishes an earlier, purer age of the church and insinuates that a later deterioration in lay Bible use was due to laziness in order to justify the restoration of this practice in renewing the church for the present. Here he provides a brief but richer portrait of how he fits the early reform events into a larger framework of ecclesiastical history. In refuting the allegation that evangelical doctrine is novel, Calvin stresses the antiquity of this teaching, attributes its obscurity not to laziness but rather to impiety, and claims that its present restoration is due to God's goodness.[41] In response to the charge that the Fathers are opposed to evangelical doctrines and practices, he details the ways that "the ancient writers of a better age of the church" support

39 Josef Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin: Studien zur Gedankenwelt des französischen Frühhumanismus* (Graz: Hermann Böhlaus, 1950), 127–41; see also David McNeil, *Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of Francis I* (Geneva: Droz, 1975). Bohatec also finds Calvin reacting to Sadoleto's commentary on Romans, like Budé's treatise published in 1535 and dedicated to Francis I. Opponents are also discussed by Battles in the notes to Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 232–34.

40 Reid, *King's Sister*, 115.

41 OS 1: 25; Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 5.

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them. Finally, addressing the claim that evangelical preaching is to blame for the present tumult and chaos, Calvin says this ought rather to be

> … imputed to Satan's malice…. Thus for some centuries during which everything was submerged in deep darkness, men were the sport and jest of this lord of the world, and not unlike some Sardanapalus, Satan lay idle and luxuriated in deep repose…. Yet when the light shining from on high in a measure shattered his darkness…. he began to shake off his accustomed drowsiness to take up arms. And first, indeed, he stirred up men to action that thereby he might violently oppress the dawning truth. And when this profited him nothing, he turned to stratagems: he aroused disagreements and dogmatic contentions through his Catabaptists and other monstrous rascals in order to obscure and at last extinguish the truth. And now he persists in besieging it with both engines. With the violent hands of men he tries to uproot that true seed, and seeks (as much as lies in his power) to choke it with his weeds, to prevent it from growing and bearing fruit.[42]

None of these points is original to Calvin, and in part the need to respond to allegations is driving his invocation of them. What *is* noteworthy is the way that Calvin presents the Reformation in France as the most recent chapter in a polarized theological historical drama that has biblical roots. Here he is moving in the direction of the image we saw in the sermon on 2 Samuel 5.

A further question is whether Calvin, in developing this polarized historical picture, is calling for a total rejection of the contemporary Catholic Church as not a church and deeming it illegitimate? At the outset of the dedication, Calvin claims to "embrace the common cause of all believers, that of Christ himself," echoing the concern for concord and idea of Christ as the bond of true unity in the preface to *Vivere apud Christum*.[43] Later he elaborates that this church united by Christ has been under siege. Nevertheless, this true church has not been entirely lifeless through the ages, nor is the poor little church in conflict with it. Calvin asserts: "against this church we have no quarrel."[44] However, he rejects his opponents' claims that the true church is always visible and that the form of the church is that of the Roman Church and its hierarchy. Instead, Calvin invokes the two marks of the church specified in the Augsburg Confession and insists that the church can – as it does in the present – exist

42 OS 1: 33–34; Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 11–12.
43 OS 1: 22; Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 2.
44 OS 1: 31; Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 9.

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without any visible appearance. This, too, he attributes to God, who at times of extraordinary impiety punishes human ingratitude in this way, while at the same time preserving "his own children though scattered and hidden in the midst of these errors and darkness."[45] Thus on the one hand, Calvin asserts the agreement of the French evangelicals with the true church of old, preserved by God across the ages. He does not call for a new church, rejects the charge of schism, and does not present his opponents as members of a false church. At the same time, by emphasizing the distinction between visible and invisible church, Calvin leaves open the possibility of giving up on reform from within, which would signal a break from the agenda of the moderate Meaux reformers. But I am not convinced that Calvin has yet made this move.

Concluding this section, I make mention of two points in Calvin's presentation that raise issues that were not central to the early French Reformation but which become essential for Calvin going forward and begin to play a larger role in his vision of reform in general and his evaluation of the early French Reformation in particular. First, early in the dedication Calvin appeals to the king on the grounds that the question that is really at stake is that of God's glory. He presents the teaching he elucidates and defends as the confession best suited to uphold the divine glory.[46] Second, in the discussion of the Lord's Supper in chapter four of the text, Calvin follows his doctrinal explanation with a critique of traditional beliefs about the nature of Christ's presence and practices such as adoration of the Host, infrequent participation, and communion in one kind for the laity. The culmination of his polemic is a detailed critique of the theology of the Mass as the height of abomination.[47] Again, these arguments are not new – they entered the Protestant arsenal with Luther's *Babylonian Captivity* and were picked up in many other writers' polemics, including those of Guillaume Farel from the radical wing of the Meaux Circle, as well as theologians in Strasbourg and Basel among whom Calvin was residing and other German and Swiss theologians. As Amy Nelson Burnett shows in chapter ten above, Calvin did not have access to nor did he likely know the major German polemics that played out in the eucharistic controversies in the 1520s except for what he learned particularly from "early presentations of evangelical doctrine" and Bucer's commentaries on the Synoptic Gospels. Outspoken polemic against the Mass tended to be downplayed by moderate Navarrian leaders like

45 OS 1: 31–32; Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 10.

46 OS 1: 23; Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 3.

47 OS 1: 152; Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 115. On the relevance of the 1536 *Institutes* for Calvin's early eucharistic liturgy, see Christian Grosse, *Les rituels de la cène: Le culte eucharistique réformé à Genève (XVI^e–XVII^e siècles)* (Geneva: Droz, 2008), 116–22.

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Lefèvre and Roussel. In a treatise purportedly appealing to the French king in the toxic climate after the Placards Affair, Calvin's invocation of more staunchly Protestant critique of the Mass was really making a statement, but I am not sure it quite yet represents a break with the *Geraldini* and French evangelical reform.

7 Network Disruption: Private and Public Letters to Associates in France, 1536–1537

The reasons for Calvin and du Tillet's short visit to Ferrara in the spring of 1536 are unknown, though it is not surprising in light of Renée of France's support for French humanists and evangelicals. While there, it appears that he circulated drafts of letters he had been working on related to questions concerning the religious situation in France.[48] These two documents were later revised and published in January 1537, after Calvin's accidental journey through Geneva and his unexpected recruitment – along with du Tillet – to assist Farel and the other ministers in establishing the newly-reformed church there. The *Epistolae duae* are widely recognized as Calvin's first thoroughly polemical publications and, moreover, are considered the opening salvoes in his campaign against religious dissimulation, or "Nicodemism." These documents and one contemporary private letter stand as evidence of a change in Calvin's view of the early French Reformation.

Frans Van Stam, one of the editors of the *Epistolae duae* for the critical edition of Calvin's works, argued in 2006 that the roots of Calvin's anti-Nicodemism can be traced to the latter part of 1536 and the inspiration – even intervention – of Farel.[49] Though the letters may have been drafted as actual letters earlier in the year, they were likely reworked for publication for a wider readership only after Calvin came to Geneva, and, as Van Stam contends, likely

48 John Calvin, *Epistolae duae* (*1537*) – *Deux Discours* (*Oct. 1536*), series 4, vol. 4 of *Ioannis Calvini opera omnia denuo recognita et adnotatione*, ed. Erik Alexander de Boer and Frans Pieter Van Stam (Geneva: Droz, 2009); abbreviated hereafter COR 4/4. De Boer and Van Stam review the evidence regarding the time and place of composition in COR 4/ 4: xxviii–xxx. English translations from John Calvin, "On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly and Preserving the Purity of the Christian Religion," in vol. 3 of *Tracts and Treatises*, trans. and ed. Henry Beveridge, notes Thomas Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 359–411. See also Christoph Burger, "Calvin comme maître de ses amis dans la première de ses *Epistolae duae* (1537)," in *Calvin et ses contemporains: Actes du colloque de Paris 1995*, ed. Olivier Millet, Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance 53 (Geneva: Droz, 1998), 149–62.

49 Frans Pieter Van Stam, "The Group of Meaux as First Target of Farel and Calvin's Anti-Nicodemism," Bibliothéque d'humanisme et renaissance 68/2 (2006): 253–75.

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after the Disputation at Lausanne in early October 1536. While the details of this evolution and particularly Farel's role in promoting a more hardline view toward the French situation are fascinating, to keep the focus on *Calvin's* views, I note simply that Van Stam suggests and Bruening confirms in chapter seven above that Farel's criticisms in a concluding address at Lausanne were directed at the Meaux reformers and particularly at Roussel. They reflected Farel's pain and bitterness over a split that went back now over a decade. Calvin didn't have a dog in that fight, but I think his recent career move and his new association with Farel certainly led him to a different evaluation of the early Reformation along Farellian lines.

It is often suggested that Calvin developed his concern with religious dissimulation after having witnessed and perhaps even participated in it in Ferrara (and possibly earlier in France). Perhaps Calvin became impatient with the hypocrisy of hiding one's own views after having lived in Basel, a reformed city. However, I agree with Van Stam that the proper context for interpreting these texts is his recent experience in Geneva, where he now had a professional responsibility to help implement purer religious practice in a politically charged and religiously divided environment. Relevant also is the influence of Bern and the larger context of Farel's efforts to reform religion in the Pays de Vaud.[50] As Michael Bruening has noted, the methods of reform utilized by Farel and his associates in this area with "little sympathy for the evangelical cause" were harsher and more confrontational than the more humanist and politically-savvy strategies for religious renewal advocated by Huldrych Zwingli and his associates in Zurich. I would add that these methods also differed in approach from the preaching of Christ, publication of catechetical aids for the laity, and networking efforts of the Navarrian reformers. Bruening observes, "Farel and his associates attacked the Catholic Mass both verbally and physically, casting the sacrament as the greatest abomination of the old faith.... With the unrelenting assault on the Mass as the common denominator, preaching, printing, and iconoclasm were all bound together in the early 1530s in an attempt to change the minds of people little inclined to abandon the 'old faith.'"[51] This was, of course, the factory that produced the infamous Placards of 1534. Carrie Klaus's discussion of Jeanne de Jussie's account of Geneva in chapter six of this volume gives vivid insight into Jeanne's first-hand reaction to precisely these sorts of aggressive tactics.

50 See Michael Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground: Conflict and Reform in the Pays de Vaud, 1528–1559* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), esp. chapter 4.

51 Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground*, 94; for details of this campaign, see also 111–23; 130–31.

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Bruening also notes that the hammer was not the only tool in the kit: the Protestant ministers and Bernese authorities also furnished Bibles (like Olivétan's French Bible) and other didactic literature, and they organized disputations, such as the one held in Lausanne in October 1536 – one result of which, as John Thompson details in chapter nine above, was the surprising appointment of Caroli as minister to Lausanne. This event, Bruening contends, had a primarily pedagogical purpose – it was catechism as "live theater" – and required "expositors rather than revolutionaries." Moreover, it marked "a crucial turning point in the shift of the reformers from sacramentarians [whose main tactic involved attack on the Catholic Mass and images] to Calvinists," that is, promoters of more intensive and some would say intrusive ecclesiastical discipline as a tool of moral reform and for defense of the sacrament of the Supper.[52] Van Stam sees this event as significant moreover for Calvin's personal religious evolution and his reforming ideals, marking the point at which Calvin "distanced himself both from the Church of Rome and from the strategy of prudence which the *évangeliques* of Meaux advocated."[53] Building on these analyses, I explore some of the ways that Calvin's responses to the event also signal a change in his views on the early Reformation.

8 Letter to François Daniel: October 13, 1536

Calvin's initial response to the Lausanne Disputation is the enthusiastic letter he wrote under a pseudonym on October 13 to François Daniel in Orléans.[54] About half the letter is taken up with a newsy apology for not having written for three months, which provides details about Calvin's travels, doings, and health difficulties in the meantime. Now among the "brethren" in Geneva, Calvin remarks that surely some report of the disputation had reached Daniel. He characterizes its intent as allowing open discussion on the question of religion, without any repercussions, and notes that the conveners thought this would be the best way to expose the ignorance of those opposed to true religion. He reports that idols and altars have begun being removed and hopes those remaining will be soon purged. Finally, he mentions the lack of adequate

52 Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground*, 138. Van Stam characterizes the event as a rite of passage from Catholic to Protestant faith ("The Group of Meaux," 225).

53 Van Stam, "Calvin's Conversion," 43; Reid also discusses these letters under the rubric "Calvin against Marguerite's Network" (*King's Sister*, 553–54). On the disputation, see also Van Stam, "The Group of Meaux," 254; COR 4/4: xxx–xlii.

54 COR 6/1: 134–38; see also Van Stam, "Calvin's Conversion," 62; "The Group of Meaux," 262–63.

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ministerial personnel and suggests that some qualified men from France might screw up the courage to help.

This was, we assume, Calvin's first participation at such an event; how thrilling it must have been for him finally to experience the kind of state-supported, public opportunity to hear purer religion articulated and promoted that the Navarrian network had been advocating and working for behind the diplomatic scenes, yet without success. Never mind that the evangelical ministers were in the minority and that the vast majority of local clergy in attendance were not convinced.[55] He can hope that some will soon join the ranks from France. Riding high on the expectations for real religious change and the potential of his new position, Calvin next finalizes for publication two open letters to unnamed associates in France, usually identified as Nicholas Duchemin and Gérard Roussel. These two letters were published in early 1537. In them Calvin attacks not the conservative Paris theologians or the radical sacramentarian wing of the evangelical movement, but rather polemicizes against two errors that he sees in the early French reform strategy. In the interest of space, I focus on the first, "On fleeing the ungodly rites and preserving the purity of Christian religion."[56]

9 *Epistola Prior*: January/March 1537

The first letter is concerned with the validity of continued participation by evangelical believers in Catholic rites and principally the Mass. Calvin insists that inward piety and outward behavior must conform, although he allows for a difference between those called to leadership in the church and ordinary believers. Only those charged with public ministry need to speak openly against these idolatrous practices. But ordinary people must also strive to live consistently with their inner conviction. Calvin urges:

> though all Christians are not equally obliged to perform the public office of professing religion, there is, however, a kind of private confession that all, without exception, are bound to make, though its precise limits cannot possibly be defined. All are not endued with the same grace to

55 For a more chastened view of the proceedings, see Van Stam, "The Group of Meaux," 255–58.

56 The second letter ventures a scathing criticism of a reform-minded priest who continues to officiate at the Mass and echoes a number of points that Farel made in his concluding discourse at the Disputation of Lausanne; see COR 4/4: xlix–l.

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> make it, and its nature depends a good deal on opportunities which do not occur alike to all. It certainly ought to extend this far: that we are not to say or do anything unworthy of a genuine faith, or inconsistent with the integrity of our religion.... For though we read not, that the believers of that [apostolic] age declaimed on their religion in streets and public highways, nay, read that they dissimulated that they were Christians from those to whom it would have been perilous to divulge it, we at the same time read that they were most studiously careful not to give any indication adverse to their religion, or to simulate that they were anything else than Christians.[57]

I think it is important to note this distinction; Calvin, now with a teaching office in the church, views himself and his fellow leaders as having a special duty to speak out against abuses. All have an obligation to conform outward behavior to inward belief, though the burden for open confession in places where evangelical faith does not enjoy state support rests more on those with an ecclesiastical vocation.

Despite this concession, the bar for what constitutes illicit behavior is rather low because now, for Calvin, the stakes are so high. Themes of idolatry, sacrilege, and pollution permeate the treatise, a large part of which is taken up with demonstrating that injunctions from the Bible and early church writers about abstaining from idolatry when living as religious minorities in pagan societies pertain to contemporary Catholic ceremonies performed in the name of God. Among the key ceremonies falling into this category, Calvin lists worship of images, extreme unction, purchase of indulgences, sprinkling holy water, and attendance at the Mass (even referring his readers to his discussion in the *Institutes* of this point). He vividly paints a scenario in which an evangelical who simply observes a Mass is subtly induced to follow along with the devout Catholic worshippers. He then turns to address those priests who would continue to officiate at Mass, even though they have been instructed in the one eternal priesthood of Christ. Going beyond his admission in the 1536 *Institutes* that the annual participation in the Mass provides some "mangled, halved, and mutilated form" of the Lord's Supper, he claims here that the Mass is "a deformed thing stripped of all the symbols of the Supper."[58]

There is much more harsh critique, but leaving that aside let me point out just one more passage with direct implications for Calvin's view of the early

57 COR 4/4: 21–22; Calvin, "On Shunning the Unlawful Rites," 376.

58 OS 1: 160; Calvin, *Institutes 1536*, 122; COR 4/4: 39–40; Calvin, "On Shunning the Unlawful Rites," 388.

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Reformation. Reminding his addressee that he writes for a wider readership, Calvin "recalls" a conversation with associates who have long slumbered in "placid indulgence." Feeling pressed, they resorted – Calvin says – to this commonplace:

> The state of the times must be considered; we were too much occupied with remedying more important and truly serious injuries to have leisure or feel much anxiety for the removal of paltry faults and minute trifling matters. Our first concern must be to unite men's minds and imbue them with piety, to train their manners, and bring them into accordance with the rule of piety – and finally, make their whole life bear the impress of charity, meekness, patience, and the other gifts of the Spirit. When this was accomplished it would be the suitable time to descend to these lighter matters. Nowadays some men are so perverse that they make the very essence of our religion consist in a mere abomination of the Mass and other ceremonies, tolerating anything in a Christian sooner than the hearing of a Mass, and extolling and heralding as worthy of the Christian name anyone, however destitute in his general conduct of one grain of piety, who only shows himself to be a hearty hater of the Mass.[59]

Calvin references obliquely his earlier replies to this allegation, and goes on to remark that since some will now interpret him and his associates in a similar way – that is, as making the essence of religion consist in rejecting the Mass and other Catholic ceremonies – he must stress following Paul that the Mass is no light fault but rather sin against Christ, the table of the devils, and a repudiation of the table of Christ. In the present times when, he claims, attendance at the Mass functions as a Lydian stone to ascertain a person's faith, to participate is understood by the "deadly enemies of the word of God" as an abjuration of evangelical religion. As far as those to whom the critics do refer:

> Those absurd describers of religion to whom the objectors refer, those I mean (if there are any such) who make it wholly consist in merely abominating the Mass, it is so far from being my intention to defend, that I think their error ought to be strenuously resisted; nor do I think that persons by whom the whole force of piety is for the most part enervated are entitled to be recognized as the faithful at all. But though they act absurdly by

59 COR 4/4: 48; Calvin, "On Shunning the Unlawful Rites," 396.

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> confining religion to one of its minutest portions, it does not follow that that minute portion is no portion at all.[60]

Recent interpreters like Van Stam have argued that these two letters represent Calvin's call for a complete break with the Catholic church and his rejection of the Meaux group and their approach to reform. At precisely the time that Calvin and Farel were engaged in instituting the reformed church in Geneva, he was won over to Farel's view, also expressed by Christopher Fabri at the Lausanne Disputation, that the church of the pope is no longer the church of Christ.[61] In light of Calvin's distinction between the invisible and visible church, I think that point is still open to debate.

However, what *is* clear is the picture of internal divisions among former network allies and a new judgment on Calvin's part about the incompleteness of the early Reformation. A final, poignant chapter in this story can be seen in the letters exchanged in 1538 by Calvin and his colleague Louis du Tillet, who had left his post in Geneva and returned to serve the Catholic church in France.[62]

10 Conclusion

As Calvin evaluated the early Reformation after his arrival in Geneva, found its strategies and priorities wanting, and began advancing a more aggressive reform policy, he had no idea how tenuous his own position in Geneva was soon to become. Just over a year after the appearance of the *Epistolae duae*, Calvin and Farel were out on their ears, and Calvin embarked on an itinerary that led him to Strasbourg and greater involvement in reform on an international scale. Returning to Geneva in the 1540s, he heightened his attacks on religious dissimulation as an impediment to proper reform and, more seriously, as idolatrous, blasphemous, and polluting behavior.

At the same time, he began articulating a different narrative of the early Reformation – portraying it as a movement raised up by God, centered on Luther, and spread by others to restore neglected doctrine, purify the polluted sacraments, and undo the tyranny of the present-day church.[63] This vision underlies the idealized and polarized historical picture that shapes the

60 COR 4/4: 52; Calvin, "On Shunning the Unlawful Rites," 400.

61 Van Stam, "The Group of Meaux," 263.

62 See COR 4/4: lv–lvii; COR 6/1: 310–11.

63 This vision can be seen, for example, in his 1543 appeal to the Emperor, *Supplex Exhortatio*; for discussion see Barbara Pitkin, "John Calvin's Vision of Reform, Historical Thinking, and the Modern World," in *Oxford Handbook of Calvin and Calvinism*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Carl R. Trueman (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

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reference to the 1530s in Calvin's sermon on 2 Samuel 5 and other mature writings. Jonathan Reid's observation about later chronicles and histories of reform rings true for Calvin's post-1537 attitude toward the early Reformation: "In one way or another and in order to suit the collective memory of the confessional 'winners,' all these Catholic and Protestant historians appropriated, framed, and thus obscured the story of the French evangelicals' unsuccessful reforming project."[64] Consideration of the writings of the early Calvin has shown that his own appropriation and framing developed more gradually than usually supposed, and that these early writings can serve as sources for a less obscuring and for their time more hopeful assessment of the early Reformation in France.

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